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PLATE I. Governor-General's Bodyguard, Karachi

HORNED MOON

An account of a Journey through Pakistan, Kashmir, and Afghanistan

Ian Stephens

1953
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LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is mainly about Muslim countries—which explains its title. The Horned Moon is the symbol of Islam; and the times I write about have been turbulent, as have been the emotions of the people, recalling the very British lines of Allan Cunningham:

> "There's tempest in yon hornèd moon,
> And lightning in yon cloud."

In particular the book is about the northerly part of West Pakistan and the neighbouring lands to East and West, a restless part of the world always; one where many of mankind's great affairs have been decided, where races and rulers have been made or smashed; and where there has lately been much drastic change and bloody commotion, owing to the break-up of the British Empire in India.

Whatever its future, it is fascinating to travel in now. I describe a journey made during the spring and summer of 1952, within the circle about 500 miles across, half high mountain and half plain, which centres on or near 'Pindi. It meant crossing four frontiers: those of West Pakistan, Pakistani-held Kashmir, Indian-held Kashmir, and Afghanistan. And the frontier between the two parts of Kashmir is still—when this book goes to press in August 1953—one of the mid-20th century's special "hard" frontiers, an iron curtain. To the North, very close during part of the journey, was also the better-known iron curtain which flanks Communist China and Russia.

Travel-books which delve into politics may nowadays be partly out-dated when they get published. This, in a fast-changing world, cannot be helped. And perhaps it does not matter, provided that, in reading, it is remembered that they describe not the present, but the near past; that they are, in fact, histories.

At the time of my travels, the new independent India and Pakistan were as estranged as ever. And Pakistan was in unexpected trouble; she had suffered several heavy recent blows—the worst being the murder in October 1951 of her Prime Minister, Mr Liaquat Ali Khan. So where early in 1951 a surging

self-confident enthusiasm in fresh nationhood would have been found, the visitor in the first half of 1952 met perplexity or gloom. Conditions got worse during the following winter. But now, in the second half of 1953—judging from afar—her affairs again show improvement; a succession of crises has been successfully withstood. Her common people are of sturdy stuff—better perhaps than some of her politicians. And relations with Pandit Nehru's new India—a dark theme touched on in almost every chapter—seem distinctly brighter too. The Prime Ministers of the two countries have actually, within the last month, twice brought themselves to meet, free of the threat of war, on their own sub-continent's soil—a thing that has not happened since Partition in 1947. Hopes are even expressed that, as a result of their having now agreed on when a Plebiscite Administrator can start work, the Kashmir dispute may be solved.

The book is of a personal sort. I have tried not to hurt feelings or break confidences. Risk of doing so however arises in writing of this kind. Offence is not meant; should it be given, I am very sorry. With regard to confidences, where no stipulation was made at the time, it is hard to judge afterwards whether a particular fact or opinion may be used. People talked freely during my journey; for the sake of discretion I have suppressed much—but perhaps not all that I should have.

If qualms are felt about what is disclosed on the origins of the Kashmir dispute in Chapter 10, I would suggest a glance at the footnote on p. 115.

Throughout the book appears the invented geographical word Delkaria. I made it up myself. It means what in the British days was simply India, and has now clumsily become "the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent." Reasons for its use were first set forth in an article for "The Spectator", which is reproduced in Appendix 1.

There are several descriptions of Nanga Parbat, probably the most terrible of the great Himalayan peaks, now at last climbed (July 1953) by an Austro-German expedition. I was lucky enough to get quite near it four times by air. Some of my journey also lay through Baltistan, the region traversed by this year's American expedition approaching K2.

Besides the Nanga Parbat descriptions there is much else about flying, which gives me unabated boyish pleasure. There is much,

too, about simple people, whose company may be more enjoyable, and perhaps more revealing, than that of the sophisticated and highly-placed.

Few women appear. Alas, I did not meet many. West Pakistan and the adjacent territories being Muslim, the wives and daughters of most of the poorer folk, and of some of the rich, are in purdah. To try to photograph or talk to them is impolite.

Sandwiched between the travel-descriptions is autobiographical matter, of dates earlier than 1952. Here, memory has been helped by articles and memoranda written during my editorship of "The Statesman"; also by articles first published elsewhere, e.g. in "The Geographical Magazine" and the "National and English Review."

To a mapmaker, West Pakistan is a bother. Drawn in the normal way, it sprawls North-East and South-West across Southern Asia, leaving large chunks of unwanted bare territory near the other two corners. So all my four maps or diagrams have been twisted leftwards through 35°. True North is marked by an arrow.

Spellings, where disputable, are mine—and none the worse for that. Finality cannot be reached on how some Oriental words, or at any rate Pakistani words, should Anglicize. Experts disagree. T. E. Lawrence once gave gaily irreverent reasons for flouting or ignoring them. Consider, for example, what happened to me with "Kaghan", a place often mentioned. Local usage seemed to favour "Khagan"; but there were doubts, so I asked authorities. The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names in Kensington Gore advised "Kagan", quoting in support, which seemed decisive, the first edition of the Survey of Pakistan, 1950. Soon however came vigorous rebuttal from Karachi. The place, said the Government of Pakistan—and after all it is their place—is "Kaghan"; they grimly added: "all other variants are unacceptable." But "Chakoti"—an important spot nowadays, the last Pakistani-held post before you cross the Kashmir cease-fire line—revealed rents in this impressive façade of finality. For whereas the Pakistani civilian Departments in Karachi wanted "Chakothi", the military ones in 'Pindi, nearer the scene, crisply ordered the shorter version. So too with Muzafferabad, Nagar, and other places: experts differed, Pakistani or British.

The Index is as good as I can make it—without making it

awkwardly long. All indexes select and omit; nearly all may be apologized for. Chief among my omissions is "Muslim." Owing to the book's nature, this word is profusely scattered through the text. To record such references would either clog the Index with undifferentiated page-numbers, almost meaningless, or need such breaking up as almost to make the Index a synopsis of the book. Similar omissions are "Pakistan", "India", "Asia", "Delkaria", "Western."

The characters and places are real, except Sir Montmorency Jones (Chapter 1). Three of the minor characters have been given fictional names.

All the photographs are mine except two: those facing pp. 26 and 145, for which I am indebted respectively to the R.A.F. and the R.P.A.F.

Much my biggest debt of gratitude, difficult to express, is to the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, who enabled the writing to be done in the most delightful place in England. They are in no way blameworthy for the book's undonnish qualities.

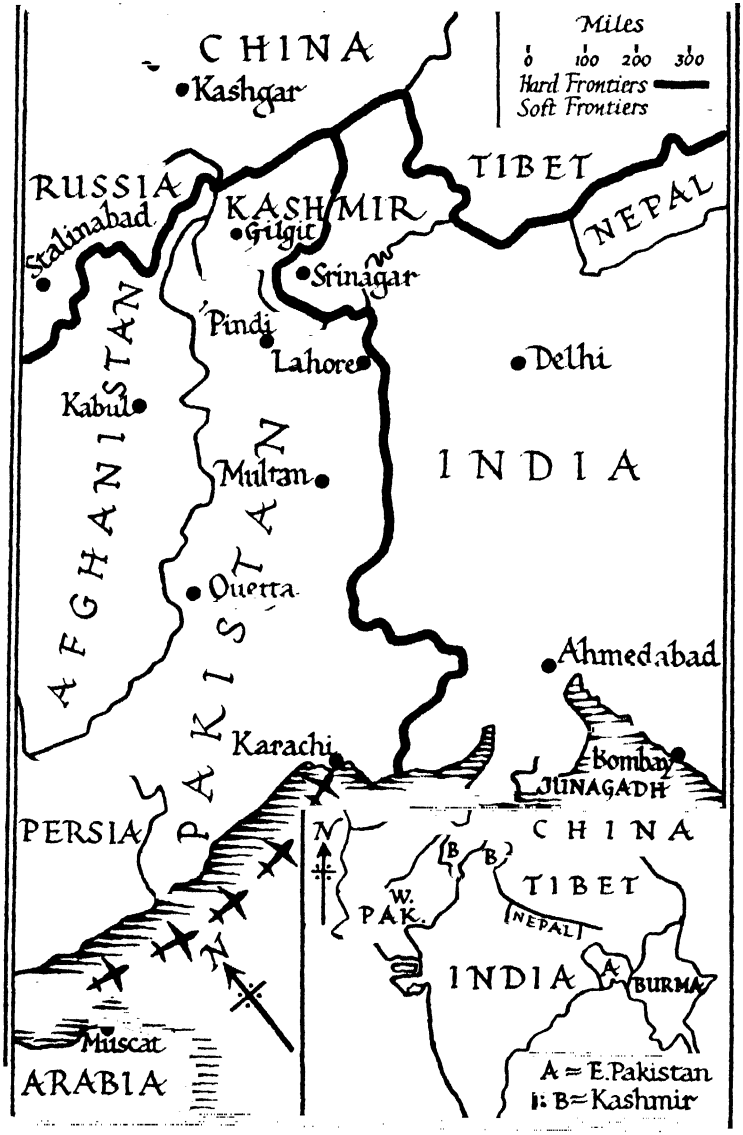
I am very grateful as well to the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Royal Geographical Society, for help in checking some of my facts; to Miss Helen Liddell, who kindly read parts of the typescript and offered valuable advice; to Mr Ralph Botham, former R.A.F. pilot and guest in my Calcutta flat, amateur of English literature, who soon tracked down a reference for me which had evaded the learned; and to my efficient successive secretaries, Mr A. L. Böckmann and Miss K. L. Dickinson, who relieved me of much labour.

CAMBRIDGE, *August* 21, 1953

PART ONE

PRELIMINARY

DIAGRAM 1


CHINA
Kashgar
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Hard Frontiers
Soft Frontiers
RUSSIA
Stalinabad
KASHMIR
Gilgit
Srinagar
TIBET
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Pindi
Lahore
Delhi
Kabul
AFGHANISTAN
Multan
INDIA
Quetta
PAKISTAN
Ahmedabad
Karachi
Bombay
JUNAGADH
PERSIA
P.
CHINA
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B
B
TIBET
W.
PAK.
NEPAL
INDIA
A
BURMA
Muscat
ARABIA
A = E. Pakistan
B = Kashmir

distorted things, came out from Pandit Nehru's own Ministry in New Delhi—I suppose without his knowledge. When we did not use them in one or other of our offices, local officials rang up, demanding to know why.

Before I left for Delhi, we had sent good reporters to East Bengal. They had confirmed the comparatively moderate impression we had already formed, basing a series of despatches on direct observation, and on data from sources of integrity, such as Quaker and Roman Catholic welfare workers. Some of these despatches had been published. But by the time I got back to Calcutta the atmosphere had rendered the rest unusable; to have printed them would have invited mob-assault. No wild rumour of atrocities on Hindus was too evil for credence; statements of fact, pleas for level-headedness were themselves wicked, proof of pro-Pakistani bias. Hysteria swept the city; British residents helplessly watched their best Indian friends getting wrenched from their mental moorings.

Pandit Nehru twice visited West Bengal during these weeks. On the first occasion he asked to see editors at Government House, and I recall driving there. Walls of young Hindu toughs lined the approaches, predominantly Bengali, fanatically aroused, shouting for war. They were fine lads; it is nonsense to suppose that Bengalis necessarily are of poor physique. Two of them I recognized, friends of mine from the gymnasium where I had learnt Yoga exercises.

What Pandit Nehru said to us was equivocal, the sort of Either-Or address at which he is adept. A Hindu fellow-editor remarked to me afterwards: "He means war." I doubted this; I could not make out what he meant—except that he was probing public sentiment. But at any rate he did not at that stage firmly discountenance war; the implication rather was that India was not ready.

By the first week of March, whatever Delhi's intentions, war had nearly come; the two countries were within a hair's-breadth of it. Troops had been moved, not only in Bengal but—more perturbing—in the Punjab. India's armoured division, to which no real Pakistani counterpart existed, was pushed forward in a way which threatened Lahore.

But events in and around Calcutta, owing to the intense passions stirred up, had now got out of control. In Howrah, the

city's big Western industrial suburb, there was a horrible pogrom of Muslims. For two days the skies were brown with the smoke of burning bustees—the tenements and shacks of the very poor; exact casualties were never known. To deal with this, martial law was locally declared, though a few hours later Delhi repudiated it. In another suburb an eminent British citizen, the President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, was battered to death by a mob when trying to protect a Muslim servant.

During his second visit to Calcutta, in the third week of March, Pandit Nehru's attitude had evidently changed. Himself non-communal, a sincere secularist, he had doubtless now recognized the nature of the Hindu extremism unleashed. Soon afterwards, he and the Prime Minister of Pakistan arranged a meeting, and gradually the crisis passed.

But it left scars. If, two and half years after Independence, such a storm could come out of almost nothing, and inexplicably be allowed to grow unchecked, involving hundreds of thousands of the innocent in misery, it might happen again. Pandit Nehru, who in the latter phases of the affair had exercised restraining influence, would not last for ever. The calamities of 1946-47 had intelligible cause, and could be accounted final; those of 1950 it seemed could not.

Chapter 3

A RETURN

IT was February 22, 1952. I stood at the Victoria Airways Terminal in London, eager to start my journey back to Asia. I was going this time in a very different capacity: simply as a traveller, disburdened of the worries of editorship, a free man. A minor illness had already delayed me; soon the perfection of the lovely Delkarian winter would be over. The quicker I was off the better.

For me the North-Western part of the subcontinent had always been the most attractive; the prospect of revisiting it was therefore exciting. During the last few days, while packing and completing my arrangements, I had felt the acquired Asian part of me quickly growing again, becoming restless in its renewed vitality, enticing me with happy memories. Before most big journeys some break-up of personality occurs, but on this occasion it was stronger than I had ever known it. I was leading two lives, my inner being astretch across two continents.

Standing there, I wondered: would Rahim be at Karachi? I had written to him, but got no reply. It would be good to see him—and later perhaps to go with him to his harsh exhilarating Pathan hills. In past years I had done so whenever chance allowed. And in Delhi or Calcutta I usually had one or more Pathans in my employ. Before Rahim there was Anwar Khan; for a few years the two had overlapped. And I had early noticed, with amusement, that the personal background to my life thus created made me sometimes almost think as a Pathan myself, reacting to problems in very un-British fashion.

An instance of this which could have been serious happened in 1940. One morning Anwar, then in my service some while, came to me almost weeping with the news that his brother Majid had been arrested.

"You remember him, Sahib, the younger one. You met him when you visited our village."

I did indeed, a likeable, eager lad with a charming smile and

gold-brown eyes. And now, because of a blood-feud, he had killed someone in a village squabble—he looked very strong—and had been charged with murder. It was tragic.

A fortnight later Anwar came and said: "You remember Daud, that other brother of mine, Sahib, who called to see you at the hotel in Peshawar?" I did. "Well, he's been making enquiries about the magistrate before whom Majid is to be brought, and he believes Rs. 500 would fix it. Sahib, please, could you lend it to us? I can't raise it myself, and Daud as I told you is in debt because of his marriage."

It was quite a big sum, about £37, and alarmed me. I would not get it back; to deduct it by instalments from Anwar's pay, as he urged, was hardly thinkable. I was not affluent at the time. I hedged.

But privately I realized that I would probably produce the money. This boy should be got off. Anwar was my man; his brothers Daud and the golden-eyed Majid were therefore mine too, or I was theirs; we were at one in this matter, a sort of sub-tribe. I was aware of the blood-feud; Anwar had told me years ago. By Pathan standards the lad had done no real wrong; he had fulfilled a family duty—rather clumsily.

A day or two later, before I had given the answer, Anwar reappeared, in misery.

"Sahib," he exclaimed. "Very bad news! The case is transferred. Another magistrate will try it."

My distress perhaps almost equalled Anwar's. And it was only months later, when I had heard that the boy had been sentenced to transportation, that I noticed how in this matter—quite an important one, legally and ethically—I had been about to behave as a Pathan, to throw my British scruples overboard.

Moreover, to be frank, if similar circumstances again arose, I am not sure how steady my scruples would be even now.

Another reason for my eagerness to be off, this grey morning, was that I had not much liked being in England yet. I was maladjusted—and puzzled at being so. I felt over-critical of everything. When young, I had looked on the average retired Englishman from India as a figure of fun; I still think he often was. Had I become like him? But he was usually someone of rigid attitudes, who when in India had surrounded himself with

artificial Englishness; whereas I had willingly let myself get Orientalized. This suggested adaptability on my part, not rigidity. What then was the matter with me, and my relations to my country? Why could I not easily readapt, now that I was back?

There were of course many obviously criticizable things. Changes since I went to work abroad had been exceptionally big. When I reached India in 1930 Britain was still a Great Power. Now she was impoverished and shoddy; and on top of this there was much inefficiency. Sometimes "couldn't-care-less" seemed the national motto. In such circumstances the continuing calm assumption that the British way of doing things must be best was an absurdity, and irritating.

"Back at last; how glad you must be!" had gushed a feminine acquaintance. "Twenty years in India! Such lazy, dirty people, I always thought!" It was not easy to retort as I should have liked. Most British people seem unaware that, however filthy the streets in the East may be, in affairs such as bathing or the intimacies of personal hygiene Orientals are usually much the cleaner. I discovered this soon after I first got to India, and changed my ways. Other practices in Britain, unheeded when I was young, now seemed, to my Orientalized tastes, displeasing. "Why can't you lick them?" asked the young woman wonderingly at the post office when, to fix some stamps just bought, I tried to reach the rubber sponge behind her grille.

Yet people were incredulous or touchy if you made adverse comparisons. The queueing, the bad cooking, the dilatory return of laundry, the time-wasting pettiness of the food-rationing must have struck many overseas Festival visitors in 1951 as peculiar. But if so, this was not disclosed; the newspapers were full of national self-praise. There seemed a new resentfulness of criticism, or of practical suggestions that other countries' ways might be worth copying.

In particular my compatriots' rule-bound state surprised me, their meek acquiescence in regimentation. After winning two world wars for freedom they seemed almost to like their chains, or to accept them with Oriental fatalism. Thank God, I thought, on this day of departure, for the indiscipline of the real Orientals whom I had lived among and was returning to, for their variety and vitality, even for multilingualism and illiteracy! Bureaucratic

dragooning of the modern British sort is impossible if the prospective victims cannot read or write.

Low-toned formalities were still completing themselves at the Airways Terminal counter. Everyone except the foreigners took his right place, answered the questions methodically, filled in forms almost as if enjoying it. There was nothing yet to indicate when we would move off to the buses.

A first inter-continental air-voyage is pure delight. After that, your mood before the always thrilling moment of take-off may be jarred by the preliminaries, and by foreknowledge of them, for they vary little. To bed the night before, wondering whether they will call you punctually, whether the taxi will come; then to the Terminal at grey dawn, a hollow feeling inside, partly from a skimped and early breakfast, partly from half-smothered imaginings of death by air-crash before sunset.

Then the lining-up at barriers, interrogations, weighing of luggage, the mechanical smiles of uniformed lady attendants. Futile scraps of overheard private conversation; fellow-passengers' coughs, swirls of tobacco-smoke—nervous over-smoking seems inevitable on these occasions. The carking fear that you will mislay something: wallet containing cash and ticket, raincoat, currency coupons, health certificates, briefcase, hat.

A wait on cushioned benches; that hollow feeling inside again. Jerky announcements incompletely audible on the loudspeaker, about other aircraft. . . . Oh, this is really it, they're talking of our own aircraft for Karachi.

Now we herd sheeplike through the hall into the waiting buses. Away we go. London streets; unrepaired bomb-damage in the outer suburbs; those garish modern factories along the Great West Road. Memories well up of past journeys; some bringing pleasure, amusement, others pangs of regret. Chatter-chatter in the packed vehicle between strangers scraping first acquaintance, gusts of uneasy well-meant laughter, cigarettes being offered and lit.

These overtures are largely futile; we shall be fellow-travellers for a few hours only, noisy physically-restricted hours. A ship's voyage acquires a life of its own; people are together long enough to form a social unit. An airliner is but a metal pipe through which disconnected individuals, almost as mutually unknown when they

land as when they emplane, are siphoned from one great reservoir of urban humanity to another.

Moreover my one attempt so far today at sociability did not do well. Ahead of me in the queue at the Terminal a young Cairo-bound couple had been in trouble, from miscalculating pounds and kilos, a frequent trap.

I sympathized, and babbled on: "We ought to have been conquered by Napoleon, don't you think? No pounds then, only kilos."

They gaped. The attendant said tartly she knew nothing about that; kilos were so simple she couldn't think how passengers made such mistakes.

And now in the bus the couple eye me uneasily. Perhaps a madman? What fresh prank might he be up to when airborne?

We turn left into Heath Row airport, clamber from the bus sheeplike again. More barriers and lining-up; passports, customs declarations, emigration forms. The flock drifts forward from hall to hall, sidles past wooden fences, its uniformed sheepdogs fussing on the flanks. Officials, very polite, agree that I am a non-smoker, but get fascinated by my camera; from a pocketful of documents I triumphantly draw the original receipted bill. Good boy!

Another wait, on cane chairs this time. We must be near the emplaning-moment. Will I get an outer window seat, or an almost viewless one by the aisle? Unwanted cups of tea are thrust upon us, farewell telegrams announced, illustrated magazines displayed for sale.

Then on the loudspeaker: "Would passengers for Rome, Beirut, Karachi . . . please . . ." Out we troop to the beautiful great Qantas Constellation waiting on the wet tarmac.

Hell, an aisle-side seat! But I've done this London-Karachi trip before, my neighbour seems a friendly type, perhaps he's new to it; I can get glimpses sometimes through his window, and nothing anyway can rob me of the thrill of take-off, coming so soon now. Splutter, roar; the engines start. I'm very hollow inside, perhaps those hospital doings explain it. It was a very minor operation, but still . . .

The trim stewardess appears, makes sure our safety-belts are fastened; offers cotton-wool, sweets. Now we rumble slowly off across the runway; halt, brakes on. Engines get their final testing, one by one; the whole plane shakes.

We're off! I know nothing to equal it, this lovely sensation; always it thrills me, the enormous forward-surging power. It enwraps one, embodies one within itself, unites one with the aircraft's giant strength as it gathers itself for the final glorious transformation, the moment of becoming airborne. Faster and faster, things beside the runway flick by. A little shake, the earth-caused vibrations from the wheels cease momentarily, resume, cease altogether, and we're aloft on great metal wings; the English fields and grey-brown buildings drop gently away.

Tension eases. Safety-belts are cast off, the lighted notice over the cockpit-door permits smoking, talk is attempted against the hum of the engines; my neighbour discloses that he sells electrical switchgear; the stewardess reappears with magazines and newspapers. We ride smoothly in a featureless greyness, between two layers of cloud. There is nothing now to see, nothing to think of except the contentment of being really started on this journey, with Delkarian pleasures and adventures ahead. . . . I find myself very tired. Something happens that I cannot remember ever happening before so soon after the thrill of take-off: sleep.

My neighbour is nudging me, how infuriating. Damn the man, I need rest, I have been unwell.

No, no; un-damn him utterly, what kindness, this is superb! He points through his window, offers to change places with me, we are in empty blue air, the wintry Alps a crinkled sugar-white mass glistening just ahead. Below us, sickle-shaped, greenish, a gauze of morning mist draped over part of it, lies the Lake of Geneva.

We must be flying high. Craning my neck, I see what looks like 15,000-ft. Mt. Blanc; yes, and we begin to pass right over it, perhaps at 19,000 ft. The aircraft is very steady, jagged pink and grey rock juts through the ice near the exquisite summit beneath us, and beyond it steep-sided snowy valleys full of blue shadow sprawl down to dark pine forests. A thread of winding road appears; a village, tiny, toy-like, the houses recognizably wearing wide Swiss eaves; then a coiled snake of small distant river, its skin shining in the morning sun.

Recollection stirs of a recent very different experience. The last time I flew among big snow mountains was ten months ago, with F/O. Mohammad Ahmad of the Pakistani Air Force,

shortly before my aerobatics at Peshawar in the Fury. We were going in a Harvard to Chitral.[1]

What a contrast! Then two men upborne by a single engine, never above 13,000 ft., huge high towering Himalayan rock-walls averaging perhaps 18,000 ft. enclosing us, apparently almost crushing us; and ahead, the majestic 25,000-ft. bulk of Tirich Mir. We felt very puny. From the frail cockpit-floor draughts of cold air crept up my trouser-leg, the machine bucked and swayed in pockets of turbulence, on my back was strapped a parachute, with a turn of the hand I could open the perspex-hood and thrust out my head into the whizzing air. Now, one among two score or so of haphazardly-gathered strangers, carried as if in a well-warmed, amply-cushioned hotel lounge by this great four-engined job, the airliner "Braemar", I pass smoothly 4,000 ft. above the highest and most famous peak of little Europe.

We reached Rome in time for early lunch. The perfectly cooked veal was startling after the diet of England. Italians may be unaccountable foreigners, it would certainly be pleasant to be back among familiar Pakistanis in Karachi tomorrow; but this invaded and supposedly defeated European country, it appeared, knew how to live.

Another memory stirred: of a landing here in 1950 by B.O.A.C. Argonaut Westbound from Cairo. Four hundred miles behind, an engine had failed. The weather was rough, so there was some risk; the failed engine being a starboard one, we also had to approach the runway clockwise, contrary to normal. When this sort of thing happens to a transatlantic airliner the Press may excitedly report an "emergency landing." But so stolid had been the stewards and crew throughout, moving on routine jobs along the aisle, that perhaps only three passengers knew there was anything wrong.

Sitting outside the still bomb-damaged Rome airport on builders' rubble, pleasantly relaxed in the sunny warmth, I recalled that fine display of traditional British phlegm, glad that this time we had no dead engine to delay us.

How small Europe is! The 10,000-ft. difference between Mt. Blanc and Tirich Mir had shown this; it re-emphasized itself as we went South-East from Rome over the mainland leg and foot

[1] See Appendix II

of Italy. At Taranto, flying at 17,000 ft., the eye could span this bony limb which dangles from the body of a continent. Beneath us lay the shore of the gulf, calm blue waters lapping against pale sand; and looking back into the sun-glare across the dark corrugated peninsula I saw water once more on the far side: the glinting Tyrrhenian near Salerno.

By evening we were over the Peloponnese. After the lunch-halt I had got a good place by a window, and rejoiced at the wide view. Fading pastel shades on sky and land and water, saffron, rose, apple-green, dove-grey; a curving lonely coast; small steep-sided Greek mountains, snow-powdered; the pathos of twilight.

And as darkness grew, so did something which, on its re-appearance in flight at that hour, always causes a stab of private disquiet; a reminder that mankind was not born to travel this way. Something unpleasantly close, on the engines: the wavering, mauve-blue plumes of incandescent exhaust-gases, the glow of red-hot metal pipes.

Passengers now and then glanced at it—and glanced away, to the comforting preparations for our dinner. Why vex the mind with thoughts on the miracle of flying, on the fact of our being poised inside a structure of petrol-propelled aluminium, up there in the night sky, separated from the earth by three miles of void? Over our knees the stewards were fitting little movable tables, cutlery and glasses and napkins were being laid, sherries were offered, the lights in the saloon were bright, there was laughter. My benefactor of the Mt. Blanc episode, the merchant in electrical switchgear, beckoned me to join him.

Soon after the excellent meal had been cleared, Beirut began twinkling distantly through the windows, a necklace laid on black velvet between hills and sea. As we circled before a smooth night landing, the crew switched off the lights—thoughtful of them—to display the scintillating city. Soon we were put through the formalities; a bus took us over pot-holed roads to our hotel, the Bristol, perhaps equalling the King David at Jerusalem or the Heliopolis at Cairo in opulence. Looking from the window as I undressed, I saw, under the eucalyptus trees, a donkey stepping delicately by, and astride it a bare-foot boy wearing Arab head-dress. The East again!

* * * * *

An untidy Levantine landscape at dawn: red earth, groups of stone-pines, a glimpse of blue sea, of surf windily breaking on a yellow shore; then the airport formalities again, and off we set, leaving Beirut on its promontory, making a circuit to clear the high mountains of Lebanon behind the bay. Through their wrappings of snow the curious horizontal strata poked gauntly.

It became bumpy as we topped the crest, heading towards the desert; the huge brownness of it ate into the thin snow strewn over the retreating foothills. Amidst the wilderness Damascus before long appeared, away to the South, on a patch of fertile palmy green. For me it held happy pre-war memories. But we were flying high, soon there was little but haze and glare below, and thought turned inward. I again began puzzling, up in that unstable Arabian air, over my difficulties of readjustment, my joy in returning to Asia, my feeling that among Orientals was where I belonged.

Sound reasons for criticizing many things in Britain existed. But my estranged state seemed partly emotional. Where lay the cause? Peering into the desert, and into my mind, I began to see the outlines of an answer. The key to happiness, indeed to practical success in life, is in giving rather than taking, in positive outflow not negative retention. And my Indian work, baffling though it had latterly been, required strong positive outflow always: in the executive tasks of newspaper-production, in the impact of our ideas on politics and public opinion, in daily association with able colleagues, in encouragement to juniors, in affection for personal employees.

As yet I had found no equivalent channels for outflow in Britain. Moreover to love the British, when you feel rather a stranger among them, is comparatively difficult. They are cold; they wear thick skins of reserve. To love Indians and Pakistanis, however foreign you may be, is easier, they have several skins fewer, are emotionally exposed.

Walking down an English street you cannot well wear your heart on your sleeve—and if you did it might pass unnoticed. With Indians and Pakistanis this is somehow not so. If you genuinely like them, feel at one with them, if there is spontaneous outflow from you, reciprocation very quickly comes. And by thus giving, you may get something back. Outwardly it may appear otherwise, you may be let down, treated unjustly, even

be killed in a riot when on a journey of charity, as happened to an acquaintance of mine. Yet the underlying fact of warm emotional reciprocity and exchange remains, and has value.

The skins of reserve in Britain, however, are certainly not impenetrable. A big reason for my alienated sensation, I now saw, was that in my present unfamiliarity with things and people there I had less than in Asia to give. That would right itself after my return. The shortcoming was more mine than my country's.

The airliner "Braemar" tossed and creaked on above the dust-haze towards the Persian Gulf and Karachi. Last June the skies, Hampshire skies, had freed me from my Indian editorship when it was good to be freed. Now, returning Eastward, the Arabian skies had helped to free me from misconceptions about myself and my feelings for the land of my origin, left behind yesterday.

PART TWO

SINDI, PUNJABI

DIAGRAM 2

Miles
0
50
100
150
Hard Frontiers
Soft Frontiers
Author's Route
Kashgar
Yarkand
CHINA
(SINKIANG)
RUSSIA
INDIAN-
PAKISTAN-
HELD
KASHMIR
HELD
Leh
KASHMIR
Hunza
Skardu
Gilgit
CEASE-FIRE LINE
Srinagar
Chitral
Muzafferabad
AFGHAN
I
S
T
A
N
Dargai
Pindi
Mirpur
Peshawar
Jalalabad
Lahore
W E S T
Shahpur
Mianwali
FROM KARACHI
P A K I S T A N
I N D I A

Chapter 4

ASIAN ONCE MORE

WITHIN a few days of landing in Karachi I belonged again to Asia; had been reintegrated; felt as if I had never been away.

Reasons were three. On the personal side Rahim Khan had managed to come back, renewing our 14-years' companionship. Soon after my arrival he had turned up at my hotel; immediately my life had a familiar, affectionate, ruffianly background. On the official side, my welcome had been heart-warming. Further, Pakistan was in difficulty. Much of the confidence so noticeable when I passed through on my last leave from India had gone. Mr Liaquat Ali Khan's murder in October had plainly left an appalling gap; reports of disturbances in Dacca greeted my arrival; food-surplus had been succeeded by mysterious shortage; there were other distresses. My sympathies were enlisted for this still young State, one of the world's geographical curiosities, and manned by many of my friends.

Her start in life had been hazardous, and she had since had much bad luck. Perhaps never in history was a country born to more daunting conditions. For a year before August 1947, when the old India was carved up, the whole Indo-Gangetic plain, 1,700 miles of it from Peshawar to Dibrugarh, from Karachi to Chittagong, had been politically convulsed, racked by communal rioting. A few days before the two new countries' birth, administration in the Punjab collapsed. It was a horrible kind of civil war; Refugees in unprecedented numbers were on the move. Eventually Pakistan took in rather more than she lost, about seven millions, most of them totally destitute; the job of providing for them almost overwhelmed her. Whereas at Delhi the new India had an established capital, she then had none. Ministers of the Central Government at Karachi lacked offices, furniture, clerks, records, stationery, telephones.

Physically, the whole idea of Pakistan seemed freakish to many: two blocks of territory, 1,000 miles apart, with a stronger, apparently unfriendly, Power between. Friends as well as foes

wondered if such an odd structure could last. As later events showed, two contrasting things held it together: faith, nationalistic or religious, and the latest mechanical techniques such as aviation and radio. Economically, too, there were grave misgivings. It would have seemed wild fantasy at that time to suggest that, in about two years, the Pakistani rupee would stand at a big premium over the Indian.

For reasons of local politics, nearly all the British officials at once left the Punjab, the most riot-torn province. Besides being in general the weaker State, Pakistan had relatively fewer trained administrators. Conditions in the banks and mercantile offices were also chaotic, owing to the exit of Hindu and Sikh clerks. The Armed Forces, in process of being unpicked and re-created from those of undivided India, were disorganized, and many of the men distraught about their families' plight in the disorders.

Then, within ten weeks of the new country's birth, came a major disaster. Because of events in Delhi which I saw at close quarters and will describe later,[1] most of Kashmir, always considered vital to the Pakistan concept, was lost, at any rate for some years. In September 1948 another seemingly shattering blow fell: the founder of the State, Mr Jinnah, died.

Yet when I passed through for England in May 1951, not only did all these ills except the deprivation of Kashmir seem to have been overcome; Pakistan rode on the crest of a wave of self-assurance and prosperity. Her Prime Minister, Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, who at first perhaps was thought of as no more than an able party politician, had grown to acknowledged greatness by the exercise of office, and was now a world figure, on equality with the rival country's Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru. In overseas diplomacy he had lately triumphed by compelling discussion of the Kashmir dispute at the Commonwealth Conference in London, despite strong Indian objections. Even more remarkable was Pakistan's financial strength, a result partly of the temporary and accidental advantage which the Korean war gave to primary producing countries, but partly also of the skill of Mr Ghulam Mohammad, then Finance Minister. The new State was booming.

Now, in February 1952, chillier airs could be sensed. Trading prospects were much less rosy; a recession was evidently beginning. People seemed exhausted after the tension in Indo-Pakistani

[1] See Chapter 10

PLATE II. Old Pathan watchman on guard at a Minister's house, Karachi

affairs during the previous autumn. Provincial rivalries or misunderstandings had increased. There was talk of drift, of difficulty in getting decisions in high places.

Rapid oscillations in circumstances or mood can be good for no country; they are particularly bad for a new one.

When on February 28 I answered a formal crested invitation to tea with the Governor-General, I was in fact going to meet an old friend. As a junior official in Simla in the 1930's, I had got to know Mr Ghulam Mohammad, then a rather junior official too—later Finance Minister of Pakistan, and now the highest in the land. We had kept in touch over the years, and during my visits to Karachi after Partition I always called, and he always spared time for a talk.

"How very refreshing to see you!" was his cheerful greeting; and almost at once our grand surroundings, the big State drawing-room, the cushions and curtains, the uniformed A.D.Cs. and servants in scarlet livery faded, and I had regained the company of someone intimately known. But I noticed with concern that he now walked with a stick. His illness some months before had been serious; and it was understood that he had been offered the Governor-Generalship, in the Cabinet reconstruction of October 1951, partly because of poor health. Pressure of work in the higher post would be somewhat less.

We touched on many matters—personal, political. Sanguine by nature, he took a view of Indo-Pakistani relations not quite so despairing as some of the officials I had seen. He asked eagerly about conditions in Britain, admiring the new Government's efforts to avert economic collapse, but wondering whether heavy rearmament and a Welfare State were really compatible. Labour's grant of freedom to the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, he considered, was the finest act of statesmanship in this century; but British policies towards the semi-dependent and colonial territories had since faltered.

An illness sometimes beautifies a man. Ghulam Mohammad's features had a new refinement; mind and soul seemed to glow through a thin physical shell. His almost boyish optimism remained, and his brain was fully as keen; and I learned that he managed much physical activity, travelling, attending receptions, making speeches. But there seemed an emotional change;

a warmth of affection, a breadth of tolerance and understanding for which the busy Minister in full vigour had not had time.

Sitting there with him in the opulent State drawing-room, my mind flitted to an interview with Pakistan's first Governor-General, Mr Jinnah, exactly four years before. Then, too, and in graver manner, I was facing not merely high affairs of State but a human problem—of health and fortitude. For at that time, though no one realized it, the creator of Pakistan was dying, his lungs riddled with the unsuspected tuberculosis which a few months later killed him.

Actually, however, on that morning in February 1948 Mr Jinnah looked better than when I had last seen him shortly before Partition, and I said so. During an unexpectedly long interview, 70 minutes, which baffled his secretaries, he ranged widely over the course of Indo-Pakistani affairs during the previous seven months—a dramatic, fascinating story, as told by such a man. Yet sitting now four years later in those rooms, I recalled not so much the politics as what he had said about himself.

"Yes, Mr Stephens, thank you, I feel better; I am better. They say I have been ill. I have not. I know. I get tired"—the thin, handsome lips moved with the restrained, characteristic smile. "It is natural that I should. I am not young. I have responsibilities." These were understatements.

"So when I get tired, Mr Stephens, I rest. It is simple. I tell my doctors to go away. I know what to do. I will not have them fussing; they might annoy me. No, I was not ill at all."

That unbending will, that utter conviction of self-knowledge, upheld him almost till the end, keeping diagnosis and possible remedies at bay.

It was nearly dark when Mr Ghulam Mohammad said goodbye, wishing me happy times in Pakistan. I walked back to my hotel, reflecting on talks with Pakistani Governors-General, past and present. This one was an old friend; I had been with him in that capacity. Mr Jinnah, until that final meeting, when some of the reserve, the impersonal coldness, melted—perhaps because he sensed my opinions about Kashmir—I had scarcely thought of as someone capable of sympathy or suffering. To me he had been a

political phenomenon, an abstract intelligence, a set of programmes and policies to be professionally puzzled over.

The earth was almost in shadow, and as I pondered I glanced skywards. A thin veil of cirrus, far above, was still lit with a pink afterglow; and through it the new moon gave a gentle light, pale green against the pink—an Islamic colour, an Islamic moon, a Horned Moon—good augury, I felt, for my Pakistani wanderings.

Not only had Rahim Khan rejoined me. I had taken on a second orderly: Gulmar Khan, a Pathan of a different tribe, a Mahsud; and already the domestic front sizzled with the preliminaries of an explosion.

This development needs explaining. When I left "The Statesman" I arranged to set Rahim up on a little land near his village; and when I knew that I would be coming back on this journey, I had sent him a letter, stressing however that, though I would be delighted if he could come to me, he must not let this interfere with his crops. I had not heard from him. Perhaps he wrote; but he is almost illiterate, his ideas on correspondence are usually hazy if not contemptuous, and writing through a hired scribe cannot be pleasant.

However, I needed somebody. And as my trip would take me to the Pathan areas I wrote to Mohammad Hashem Khan, a leading Mahsud, asking if he could help. The notion of being looked after by a member of this reputedly ferocious tribe, the most unstable of all Pathans, pleased me, and I knew that in fact anyone sent by Hashem would be dependable.

My interest in Mahsuds dated from the summer of 1948 when, on being expelled by misunderstanding from Chitral State for supposed espionage on India's behalf,[1] I sought hospitality at a Mahsud encampment, and was received charmingly. As a result of articles then written in the Mahsuds' praise, I made several friends among them.

To find, as I now did, two Pathans assembled for me in Karachi was embarrassing to us all; and Rahim, as I feared, forthwith viewed Gulmar with obvious disfavour as a possible supplanter. He is very possessive. I saw storms ahead.

Gulmar, though his big hawk-like nose rather marred his

[1] See Chapter 12.

good looks, had the attraction of youth, and was divertingly Mahsud. He asked direct, practical questions on everything. Like Rahim he had admirable manners—Pathans may prove the best servants in the world; but he was restless, a piece of quicksilver, you could never ignore him. Possessor evidently of a strong character, you felt that, if you didn't look out, he would soon have complete control of your affairs.

He did not seem physically very tough. Within a few days he fell a victim to Karachi belly, and I was doctoring him with liver pills; he also blistered his feet accompanying me on walks, not yet vigorous ones because of my recent operation. Admittedly he had on a new pair of chaplis—the heavy, sandal-like shoes worn by Pathans; they had been bought in honour of his fresh employment, and eventually of course would be paid for by me. But, like Rahim, he plainly thought physical exercise crazy. If you had no need to walk you didn't do it; you sat around and got fat.

During these strolls he soon became a keen and adept helper in my photographic efforts. It was a new form of shikar or sport. From just behind me he would crack jokes ingeniously with the victims, diverting their attention from the lens, keeping their faces alive until the moment of the shot—and then, the deed done, would laugh delightedly at their surprise.

When we were out shooting in this fashion one day, he spoke of his own shooting in Kashmir; real shooting.

"Shooting at what?"

"Men, of course, Sahib."

I looked at him astonished. "But you only seem about seventeen."

"Yes, Sahib."

"But you can't have been fighting the Indians when thirteen?"

"Yes, Sahib"—and enquiry left no doubt that he had, and thought it not at all remarkable. He gave details of where he had gone and they made geographical sense. He had been bombed and rocketed by Indian planes, machine-gunned by Indian infantry. He had been half smothered by the blood and entrails of a mule, blown up a few yards away. He spoke of having spent a night on a snowy hillside—without socks or coat—to snipe Indian troops at dawn.

"Carrying a man's rifle was rather tiring for me sometimes",

PLATE 5. Gulmar Khan, Mahsud: 'a piece of quicksilver, you could never ignore him'

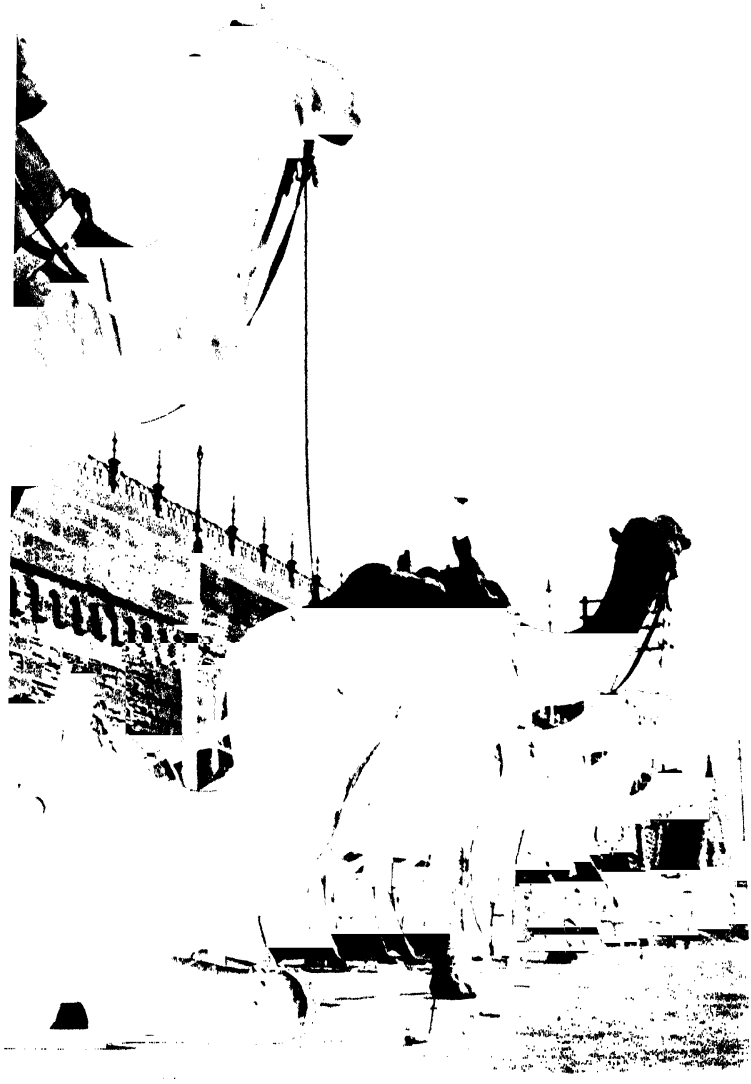


PLATE 6. Street-scene in dry, desert-fringed Karachi, Pakistan's capital

he grudgingly admitted. Remembrance of my facile thoughts on his stamina made me ashamed.

Gulmar was not with me for the whole tour. From considerations partly on my side, partly on his, he came and went—in true Mahsud style. But during several weeks I took round Pakistan this sometimes slightly alarming double charge of domestic dynamite—for Rahim, delightful creature, absurdly jealous, was with me always.

In February the Karachi sun is as strong as the English sun in July. The quick change between two climates worsened my discomfort, as I stood among the refugees' hovels at midday by the railway bridge beyond the Palace Hotel. This stinking encampment of rusty iron, wood and sacking was not there in 1948, when last I stayed in this part of Karachi. New pavement-squatting groups of destitutes had sprung up in other parts of the city also. They disgraced the federal capital, a great seaport and airport, where foreigners form their first ideas of Pakistan.

But what could be done? Despite dissuasion by both Governments, Indian and Pakistani, and public knowledge that the journey was appalling, that it entailed crossing part of the grim Jodhpur desert by foot or camel, under every sort of bureaucratic harassment, the fugitives still came, a pitiable trickle averaging 5,000 monthly. Admittedly there were occasional communal troubles in India, but of late no major riots sufficient to justify an exodus; the huge slaughterings and barbarities on both sides of the Punjab border had ceased long ago. Yet these Muslims kept coming, seeking a livelihood or lost relatives, mistrusting their own or their children's future in the new India, afraid that they would be worsted in competing with Hindus, infected with vague restlessness, or a conviction that somehow they no longer belonged.

The unending influx had added much to Karachi's difficulties. In 1939 it had been a sleepy, spacious, provincial town of about 350,000 people; now it contained well over 1,100,000. Growth in a new country is good, but not at this ferocious pace. Probably half the capital's population, whether rich or poor, were migrants, still mentally unsettled.

By the hovels squatted vendors, displaying trays of exposed eatables. A dense greyness of flies swirled over the crescents of

sliced melon, the coiled yellow sticky jalabis,[1] alighting on them, crawling thickly over them. Almost hairless dogs with oozing sores scratched frantically, or snarled and scuffled over a refuse heap. At its margins hens scraped and peered, children played, goats nibbled. Flanking the narrow path between the shacks ran gutters brimming with filth.

My eyes smarted; smoke from a powerful cooking-fire of dried buffalo-dung was blowing about. Sweat trickled from under my hat. Around me swarmed hot, friendly youngsters, inquisitive, pleased by a stranger's visit. What was in that brown leather thing; a camera? There was to be a wedding that afternoon. Would I see it? Perhaps I could photograph it? Two trumpeters for the band were produced for my inspection, fondling brass instruments. A baby, dressed already for the occasion in cheap silk finery, and beads and coloured bangles, was dandled at me.

These people had to live in subhuman, nauseous, abominable conditions. Yet at least some gaiety survived; and an introspective glance showed that, outraged though my nostrils might be, my mind really was not. I felt no particular uprush of social indignation in this place. My concern was rather that, owing to its nearness to the hotel, its squalor would be seen by Western newcomers who would misconstrue it to Asia's detriment, and feel confirmed in their sense of superiority.

Those of us who have got Asianized usually accept such things; recognize that they may be too overwhelmingly huge for effective remedy. Extremes of poverty and wealth, rapacity and abnegation, cruelty and kindness, tolerance and fanaticism, become part of the framework of life; their co-existence appears natural, indeed in a sense almost right. Variety enhances value. Wide contrasts emphasize the mutability of human affairs, put individual bodies, individual lives, in their proper place of insignificance before the universe.

Death in Asia stands much closer than in Europe, almost nudging the elbow. It may strike through a variety of swift lethal diseases, through earthquake, flood, riot, famine. Awareness of this creates a sense of impermanence—perhaps spiritually healthy. Malaria, the dysenteries, typhoid lurk everywhere. There are such horrors as rabies or elephantiasis to be feared. Every year in the big towns during the spring epidemics, scores of people are

[1] A kind of Asian sweetmeat

struck daily by smallpox, scores more by cholera. At Monghyr in Bihar in 1934 I stood on brick rubble in a foul smell. Practically all the old city had been suddenly flattened by earthquake, crushing people in hundreds. Beneath me they lay rotting and entombed. At Calcutta, in August 1946, roof-high piles of dripping putrescent corpses could be inspected on plots of waste land or in the police morgue. Vultures poked gobbling heads into the abdomens of bodies bestrewing the sidewalks. During three days of concentrated rioting there had been perhaps 20,000 casualties. The great Bengal famine of 1943, amidst which I had to work, is believed to have killed a million people.

In the West, except in war-time, life's brutal realities are as a rule hidden away, muffled; when in the end they leap forth, the shock and unpreparedness may be unduly great. Even the skies of Europe seem to reflect this difference. Their dreadful immensity is covered when possible by little fleecy clouds; the English summer stars, sprinkled as if on a softly luminous nearby screen, never glitter terrifyingly out of the black tropical majesty of empty night.

Chapter 5

FROM KARACHI NORTHWARD

ABOUT 5 a.m. at Karachi, before the orchestra of cawing crows, mewing kites, and whistling Asian starlings or mynahs has finally splintered the silence, another sound slips gently in the darkness over the air, very Pakistani: the Muslim call to prayer. In my open-windowed room I could count five distinct moazzin or criers, beginning in different places and at slightly different times; the last one, frayed and quavery of voice, I imagined as a bearded patriarch. At close range the prayer-call may sometimes strike with disconcerting stridency on European ears; but when far away, as these voices were, it is deeply moving: dignified, musical, austere, centuries old, rather melancholy, hinting of desert wastes.

Then, soon after, the cocks crow, the Eastern sky quickly brightens, the full harsh birdy orchestra blares forth, and dawn comes in a rush of flame and gold.

I was on my morning walk. Sleepy Afridi taxi-drivers wearing cheap astrakhan caps had been washing large American cars outside the hotel. Road-traffic at that hour consisted of a few drays pulled by tall squashy-footed camels, and sporadic bicyclists. Pedalling, their fluttery cotton garments were pressed over the curves of their bodies by the brisk sea-breeze, which bore particles of sand, and an aroma of railway-shunting and horse-droppings. A troupe of black, naked buffaloes, with truculent stares and occasional alarming belch-like grunts, plodded heavily along the sidewalk, propelled by a small tattered boy with a stick.

I crossed to the sports-ground of sunbaked mud near the Governor-General's House; I had observed with interest that, arriving on it, were huge maroon-turbaned men on polo ponies. Talk confirmed my guess that they were members of the Bodyguard under an officer, and disclosed too that the latter was commandant—pleasantly young for such a post—and a brother of my friend Colonel Sherif Khan, from the Frontier.

As a result, two days later, I spent some hours of photographic

shikar among these fine creatures, like great plumaged birds, using my colour-films on their full-dress scarlet uniforms. They agreed readily that they were exceptionally handsome, lacking the Western convention of self-conscious denial in such matters, and pressed eagerly forward for portraiture.

Choice of victims from such a wealth of feature and physique was a problem. In Daffadar Atta Mohammad, however, I eventually found perfection, the photographer's ideal.[1] His patience and self-control seemed infinite. Whatever I asked for . . . smile . . . look stern . . . twiddle your moustache . . . he did unfailingly, maintaining unstiffened the natural expressions and postures that he had first taken, his unusual eye-structure giving him just the extra individuality that I wanted.

I also watched these giants doing p.t. under the instruction of the adjutant, Captain Mohammad Khan, an admirable type of young Pakistani officer. Our talk soon turned—as most talk in Pakistan does—to the topic of Kashmir, and when, for argument's sake, I put up Indian propaganda points, he shot them down politely but with skill. The average British soldier tends to edge away from abstract things such as politics. In Delkaria—a subcontinent politically obsessed—they can be discussed ceaselessly.

Mohammad Khan was very British in complexion, as some Pathans are. British traditions in the Pakistani Army moreover remain strong; he had very much the manner and talk of his British Army counterparts, you thought of him as British when with him. Yet the characteristic skins of reserve were lacking, there was ready self-exposure of a sort seldom experienced in a morning's meeting with a fellow-Briton, and a sensitive, fiery personality laid itself bare, aglow through the warm brown eyes.

This swift blossoming of acquaintanceship is one of the charms of Pakistani company.

Fresh back from England as I was still, observing Delkaria from a different angle, the gulf between India and Pakistan which had so oppressed and baffled me in my editing days seemed to have shrunk. Approached from the West, the two countries have obviously a great deal in common; indeed, to a novice, they might at first be indistinguishable. The music from loudspeakers in wayside eating-stalls and cinemas was almost the same; the

[1] See Frontispiece

climate, the brown skins, the way people squatted, the clothes, the betel, the style of food, the languages, the dhobi and the sweeper—all these and much else were largely shared. Was the antagonism and suspicion really so unchangeable and rigid as I had supposed? Might not the disagreements soon dissolve, opening room for friendly partnership, even for a joint policy in defence, justifying the great 1947 experiment in Commonwealth affairs after all?

It was in this hopeful mood that I went on March 1 to the pretty Karachi seaside suburb of Clifton for a talk with India's chief diplomatic representative in Pakistan, Dr Mehta.[1] I was already fretting to be off to the North, to the real Pakistan, and adventures in the hills and borderlands. Karachi, like all federal capitals, has an artificial atmosphere. It was too cosmopolitan for my taste. So many foreigners were about that sometimes the Pakistani flavour almost vanished. American voices burr-burred everywhere; there were Japanese, Italians, Australians, Swedes. In the clubs and hotels—if the uniformed waiters were disregarded—you moved almost in the denationalized social insipidity of an ocean liner. But before leaving for Lahore it was important that I should try to start persuading officialdom to let me cross from Pakistani-held to Indian-held Kashmir; this was evidently not going to be easy, and might need weeks.

I was eager, also, to regain touch with the new India. My withdrawal had been a product of my own political conscience, and of the peculiarity of the post that I had held. Old associations were entirely unaffected, and I probably had even more friends over the border than in Pakistan. India had equally been a second country of mine, and Dr Mehta—like India's first High Commissioner in Pakistan, the genial Mr Sri Prakasa—was known for his sincere efforts to make Indo-Pakistani relations better. I might find we had much in common.

I arrived a few minutes early, and while waiting admired the fine photographs of Indian statesmen and landscape and architecture in the hall. One of them startled me however; a splendid study of what is perhaps Delhi's most famous monument, the Kutb Minar, built after the Muslim conquest as a pillar of victory by the Khilji monarchs of the 13th century. It hung prominently on the stairway. Surely, I thought, this choice of subject, here

[1] Official designation, High Commissioner; equivalent to Ambassador

in Karachi, was—to say the least—rather tactless? It would not put Pakistani callers in happy mood; the obtruded fact of present Hindu dominance in what was once a Muslim seat of power would rub an open wound. Many Karachi Pakistanis were exiles from Delhi, having had to flee during the riots of September 1947; they had lost homes and relatives and much property. Doubtless they would consider the photograph meant to hurt. They might be right.

Was it, however, placed there merely from failure to realize others' feelings? This shortcoming among Hindus had sometimes puzzled me. So sensitive themselves, they can be strangely insensitive to what is happening in non-Hindu minds. I wondered whether this might be a by-product of the caste system, of an ancestral habit of ignoring persons outside the caste, of thinking them not in the fullest sense human.

The arrival of Dr Mehta interrupted these musings. He was an affable host, his skull shaven because of a recent bereavement—which made it the kinder of him to see me; and we soon, over the tea-things, got down to discussing my Kashmir project. Certainly he would do what he could. But a request to visit Srinagar from Muzafferabad across the cease-fire line was very unusual; so far as he knew permits were only issued for travel via Delhi and Amritsar. Could I not go that way, crossing the Indo-Pakistani frontier near Lahore?

I said that, in about six weeks, the earliest time at which there now seemed a chance of the permit being ready, I expected to be in 'Pindi or beyond. Srinagar was only about an ordinary day's motor-run from 'Pindi via Muzafferabad; whereas the other route, via Amritsar—even were Delhi cut out—was many times longer, and I doubted whether I had the necessary time or cash.

Well, unfortunately he could not promise. The consent of the U.N. people would no doubt also have to be got; I could see about that separately in 'Pindi. So far as the Kashmir authorities were concerned, they were sometimes dubious about accepting visitors, "owing to certain unfortunate experiences"; and the Indian Government might want me to visit Delhi first. But he would do his best—which, as later events proved, he very effectively did.

Talk then switched to Indo-Pakistani relations. I said I was

horrified to learn—I had never seen it reported in the British Press, which largely ignores the subcontinent's affairs—that since the autumn of 1951 the frontier near Lahore had been altogether closed to land-traffic except for foreigners; Indians and Pakistanis could only get across by air. This was new. Though in the Commonwealth, the two countries had become more than ever parted by an iron curtain. He agreed that it was deplorable; but added that, despite this, there seemed lately to have been some real decrease in antagonism.

He went on, however, to express concern at the continuance of hostile, inflammatory statements by highly-placed Pakistanis, apparently to satisfy public opinion, or because, in 1947, they had unleashed something which they could not control. In India matters were otherwise. Admittedly bad things were sometimes said there too, but by leaders of the Opposition groups, not by people in or near the Government. He elaborated.

Listening as he proceeded, I began to realize anew the width of misunderstanding. He was not, of course, speaking personally, for we were scarcely acquainted; he was representing the views of his Government. And as he spoke I had that familiar, uneasy sensation: "Oh, this has happened before." He evidently took it as axiomatic, like nearly all Indians, that his country was morally on a plane superior to her rival, that she almost had a monopoly of virtue. It was an assumption I could never swallow. Speeches for instance by Indian Ministers, which they and their public did not think hostile or inflammatory, appeared at times very much so to non-Indians, whether Pakistani or Western. Some of Pandit Nehru's passionate outbursts in 1949 and 1950 had been horrifying. This blindness to the other person's possible point of view, this self-righteousness, had hitherto proved perhaps the biggest obstacle to settlement.

The two countries still remained altogether at odds about the principalities whose possession was originally disputed. These were Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Junagadh. But if India was right in occupying the first—which seemed much the most questionable—how could she be right in occupying the other two? Her declared reasons, cultural, administrative or legal, had differed radically in each case. She overran or subverted Junagadh, whose Muslim Prince had legally acceded to Pakistan, primarily for cultural reasons. It was a Hindu-majority area, she emphasized.

That in itself seemed fair enough. In the case of the much bigger principality of Hyderabad, also a Hindu-majority area, its Muslim Prince wanted to remain independent, which legally he was entitled to do. This territory she overran primarily on a different pretext: that of administrative necessity. Grave internal disorders had developed there, she declared—though some thought she was in part responsible for them herself. Kashmir, which by contrast had an overwhelming Muslim majority, she overran, so far as militarily she could, because its Hindu Prince had legally acceded to her—as Junagadh's did to Pakistan.

No word-spinning could morally substantiate her simultaneous occupation of all three. It outraged logic and common sense.

In the case of Kashmir, much the gravest, many people thought that, on every international occasion which had since arisen, she strove to block the promised plebiscite to ascertain the people's will. Moreover, though she still justified having sent troops there on the legal ground of the Maharajah's accession, she had soon afterwards in effect deposed him, and seemed now bent on abolishing his dynasty. Arbitration between herself and Pakistan had been suggested as a way out. She refused this indignantly—though urging it upon Ceylon over another disputed matter more to her taste.

If I got to Indian-held Kashmir I might find much to admire there; the Administration's proclaimed non-communal ideals and the enterprising agrarian reforms seemed very attractive. But the fact remained that it was an area overwhelmingly Muslim, whose occupation by India diverged from the principles on which the rest of the subcontinent had been partitioned in 1947.

Indian leaders often spoke of peace, magnanimity and good-neighbourliness—almost at times as if they alone in a bad world fully appreciated their desirability. Certainly they were not insincere in this; the pacifist tradition among them remained strong. Yet they maintained a big and costly military establishment—much more so than that of undivided India before Partition; and at least twice since 1947 they had threatened Pakistan with war, not by words only but by moving troops, including an armoured division.

When a country of 350,000,000 people acts so towards an adjacent one not much more than one fifth as populous, the fact cannot be ignored. Pakistan had several times appeared bellicose

too. But she was much the weaker, in resources as in numbers; her leaders moreover made no special claim to high moral standards.

Dr Mehta had been friendly and kind. I much appreciated his readiness to help my travel-project. But our political talk had set moving a familiar flood of sombre reflections. I returned to my hotel downcast. The differences between the two countries yawned big again; they would, I felt, need much bridging. The superficial affinities noticeable to a returning Westerner such as myself perhaps meant no more than those which an Easterner might see between British and Irish, French and Germans.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan at that time was Khwaja Nazimuddin, and on March 3 I went to tea with him. He is small and tubby. This did not suggest interest in sport; yet he had been a good athlete. Nor did his modest ways suggest the wide experience of public affairs which his record showed. They did not particularly suggest pluck either; yet his decision in October 1951 to step down from the Governor-Generalship—which he had held since Mr Jinnah's death—and take the murdered Mr Liaquat Ali Khan's place was courageous, and steadied the ship of State at a shaky moment.

For his modesty and courage he had two sources to draw upon: fine breeding—he comes of an aristocratic Dacca family—and religious faith.

I felt moved to see him. Over the long period before Independence when he held Ministerships in Bengal we had several times met, and once or twice also during the frantic, confused days of 1946, when the Muslim League leaders, exasperated by what they thought British and Congress duplicity in the last phase of the British Cabinet Mission's visit, were planning "direct action", and casting away their British titles. He himself had then discarded a knighthood—as did Mr Ghulam Mohammad.

Now, with men carrying Sten-guns on guard in the corridors and garden—as around Pandit Nehru or Sardar Patel in Delhi after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination—he was the chief executive of a new nation, the biggest Muslim nation in the world. Yet so unassuming was his demeanour as we sat down to tea, served off handsome green china bearing the Pakistani crest, that remembrance of his high position was not easy.

At the outset I had the duty of conveying good wishes from the Master of his old Cambridge College—which some months later elected him to an honorary Fellowship. He was pleased. Thinking then that discussion of Indo-Pakistani affairs might be bothersome, I broached a topic almost as important: the tussle within Pakistan between modernism and the religious leaders or mullahs.

Mr Jinnah and Mr Liaquat Ali Khan were Western in their ways, and the former, particularly, as a distinguished lawyer-politician in the old undivided India, had almost given up religious observance. With Khwaja Nazimuddin that was not so. In prayer, in keeping the Ramazan fast, in the other formal obligations of Islam he was known to have been always scrupulous. The ladies of his house kept in purdah—as incidentally did those of his two influential colleagues Sir Zafrullah Khan, the Foreign Minister, and Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali, recently made Finance Minister.

These facts had revived speculation. Proclaimed to be Islamic, would Pakistan choose what modernists considered the retrograde path, let her social practices be moulded by the mullahs, as in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan, or would she Westernize herself in the Turkish sense—not indeed with Turkish revolutionary speed, but nevertheless steadily? Did being Islamic mean, as Indian critics alleged, that she was a theocracy; that sectarian fanaticism was always liable to break out; that her non-Muslim minorities were second-class citizens, continually exposed to risk of butchery or oppression? Or would the declared link between the State and Islam before long mean about as much—or as little—as that in Britain between the Crown and the established Church?

The matter was being widely discussed. Both the leading English-language dailies of Karachi were busy with it. Fareed Jafri, the editor of one of them, whose uncle I was,[1] had with engaging vehemence told me that "If Pakistan becomes a Saudi Arabia she's lost her function in the world—and her own soul." But it

[1] Any accepted family friend in Delkaria may be designated "uncle", irrespective of race or creed. It is a charming and widespread social figment. Seven young people in the subcontinent at this time called me uncle: one Sikh, two Hindus, one Indian Muslim, three Pakistanis; and I acquired five new nephews or nieces during the trip. Fareed was the son of one of my colleagues during my early days as a Government official

was apparent that real public perplexity existed. Learned lectures on Islamic democracy lately published by the Minister for Information, Dr Ishtiaq Qureshi, were much quoted. Even the Western mercantile community felt itself dragged into the fray, for the mullahs had stern views about alcohol; would that mean no whisky?

Perhaps, I thought, the dilemma was being over-dramatized; Pakistan might gradually achieve her own distinctive answer to these problems.

"Islam is a practical religion, and exists for always", gently asserted the Prime Minister over the teacups. He expatiated, leaving no doubt that, though so familiar with Western ways, he continued to look upon some of them as odd. He showed no vehemence, he was tolerant and mildly amused; but he manifestly saw no reason why Pakistanis should change their traditions for others not demonstrably better. He deprecated the amounts drunk by some Americans and Europeans—his alert memory recalling, from an episode years before, that I dislike spirits. He tactfully suggested, his fine manners excluding scope for discourtesy, that many Eastern eyes still found it strange that men and women should dance together; and that the attire of Western ladies sometimes bordered on the immodest.

Between the modernists and the mullahs he would steer, I deduced, a course inclining somewhat mullah-wards. Unlike most of the mullahs, however, he evidently considered his Faith not as something ossified, but as a living plant destined for growth. Details of how affairs might work out, he emphasized, were in themselves of small moment; the need was for Pakistan to reconcile her fundamental Islamic structure—which must be kept—with acquisition of strength from selected Western techniques. This, he felt, should present no great difficulty, Islam being practical.

A former Viceroy of India, Lord Willingdon, though not a great man, was a very lovable one. He thereby managed to get the best out of many different sorts of people. Khwaja Nazimuddin, I reflected on leaving him, perhaps had a similar gift. But would this carry him far enough in controlling his Cabinet and the provincial Ministries, and in shaping his country's economic policies, and her relations with India? Did he possess the vigour, the strong gifts of leadership, the powers of quick

decision which might be needed for guiding Pakistan through the exceptional difficulties probably lying ahead? These were questions which history would decide.

The province of Sind, within which the federal capital of Karachi is embodied, as Canberra is embodied in New South Wales, was at the time of my visit Cabinetless. Democratic government had broken down through corruption and intrigue, as earlier in West Punjab—and in the Indian State of East Punjab. Sind was now ruled single-handed by the Governor, Mr Din Mohammad, a former High Court judge.

Before I left for the North he was among the other leading Pakistani personages on whom I called. He gave me lunch, a simple meal served with elegance. On a small table in a big room each of us was handed similar food in identical separate dishes, by two uniformed servants of identical height who emerged simultaneously, as if drilled, from positions by the big curtains. And over the lunch and the subsequent coffee I enjoyed much interesting talk.

The ruler of this awkward province had strong, heavily-made Punjabi features, and moved with dignified loose-limbed grace in well-cut Western clothes: an able and impressive character. At first we reminisced about mutual acquaintances in the early 30's; I had once met him in Delhi when he was a member of the Delimitation Committee, dealing with electoral problems.

We then turned to the events of 1946-47. He was forthright. Britain's decision to withdraw from her Indian responsibilities had surprised him. She had ended the war victorious, in alliance with the U.S.A. and Russia, and after crushing the Congress party's revolt of 1942, which had never seriously troubled her. At first he did not think her assertion of going could be sincere.

On her motives opinions might differ. "But whatever their nature, Mr Stephens, the manner and speed of her exit left, to say the least, a great deal to be desired." He recounted the events in the Punjab from the Muslim aspect—a story grimly familiar to me, heard from both sides repeatedly—stressing the savageries by Sikhs and Hindus in East Punjab, but rather avoiding those by Muslims in West Punjab. The horrible Kapurthala and Jullundur episodes were dwelt upon, Lord Mountbatten's alleged omission to arrest certain Sikh leaders despite warnings of what was coming,

and the allotment under the Radcliffe Award of the strategically important Muslim-majority District of Gurdaspur to India, which alone enabled her to occupy Kashmir.

But he was not wholly gloomy on the chances of the Kashmir dispute being peacefully settled. In time, he seemed to think, India and Pakistan might become good neighbours, genuine friends. "God is very wise", he remarked. "He has ordained that all men must die. So their bitter memories die with them. Indeed, even in a short while bitterness may fade. Recollection of what happened at Partition during 1947 is already beginning to fade among the living."

Like many Pakistanis whom I met, he praised the recent Indian general elections for having been very fairly conducted. He was pleased by the poor showing of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Akali Sikhs, both very anti-Pakistani parties.

He had a familiar Punjabi conversational habit, baffling when you first meet it, which delighted me—fresh back from England. When I interjected into the flow of his remarks some qualifying phrase, in part disputing them, he would retort "No, no! That's just what I say!"—though in fact my point had been the opposite; and he would then pick the point up, twiddle it round and resume as if no interjection had occurred. I found this fascinating, and recalled my bewilderment when I first met it in Simla 20 years before.

While thus engaged with the highly-placed, I kept congenial company also with Pakistanis at other levels; shopkeepers, dock-workers, traffic constables, sub-editors, hotel receptionists, the various strata of officialdom—and Mahsud tribesmen who lived in tents near the naval establishment known as H.M.P.S. "Dilawar." These were employed in the police, perhaps as much to keep them from mischief as for serious work, which consisted largely in guarding huge stores of baled cotton. I had visited their camp in 1951 to take photographs of them. They had entertained me to tea, thick and sweet and strong; it was a happy memory. And this time, as Gulmar Khan was new to Karachi, I had taken him to meet them, his own people.

Thereafter raffish-looking tribal types in variegated khaki, with virile, curiously constructed faces, kept visiting my room at the hotel. I remember one particularly, a lean, eager person, who

PLATE 7

Above: The Pakistani Navy rightly puts men such as this into its Police

Left: Waterside life at Karachi: a cheerful Sindhi dockworker

ATE 8. Proudly holding father's hookah—a gardener's son by the canal-bank, Lahore

assured me that, though Mahsuds when at home in Waziristan had in the old days usually shot at the British, they really liked them better than Pakistanis, who "think only of their bellies." How far such remarks are meant to please, or are true, is seldom easy to judge. He also laid down as dogma that only three kinds of Pathan exist: Mahsud, Wazir and Afridi. None of the other tribes count. It was lucky that Rahim was not present.

When on March 4 I entrained with Rahim and Gulmar for Lahore, a score or so of the Mahsuds came to see us off, pushing amiably in and out of the four-berth compartment to which I had been assigned, embracing Gulmar, shaking hands with Rahim and me, full of good wishes and well-meant if impracticable suggestions for our comfort—an inconvenient and perplexing invasion for the other occupants.

Next door, however, besieged by even more well-wishers and brooded over respectfully from afar by uniformed officials, was no less a person than the sister of the founder of the State, Miss Jinnah, setting forth to Multan to open a school. In popular Pakistani esteem she holds rather the same place as Queen Mary did in Britain. At present, though by no means a purdah-lady, she was invisible. But crowds would await her at nearly every intervening station, and she would emerge. I had been on the same train with her before. It would be fun.

Of my three travelling partners, one—eyeing the thrustful Mahsuds askance as his foot was trodden on—introduced himself in halting English as an Afghan general, en route to Kabul from Turkey, where he had served his country as Ambassador. Puzzlingly, however, his most conspicuous bag was labelled "Panair do Brasil." Facing as it did my fresh B.O.A.C. labels from London and the Lebanon, it added piquancy to our compartment's international flavour. He was fluent, he explained, only in French, Persian and Pashtu. With him was a taciturn servant or guard who, when caution allowed, emitted a little harsh Urdu; a native of Jalalabad, I understood. The third occupant, young, self-possessed and intelligent, a Eurasian, would five years before have called himself Anglo-Indian—a term he now firmly disavowed. He spoke of "our Quaid-i-Azam . . . our Army . . . our Prime Minister", criticized India's policy over Kashmir, and was proud of being Anglo-Pakistani—a fully integrated specimen, it seemed, of a new Asian genus.

Chapter 6

LAHORE INTERLUDE

AT the first halt, Karachi Cantonment, about three miles from the City Station, female relatives of the Anglo-Pakistani appeared, calling to struggling coolies, who under their directions proceeded, amidst profuse apologies from themselves and him, to load into our compartment many further boxes said to contain goods so fragile that they could not be put into the van.

The Afghan general's large eyes widened; his English perhaps failed him. This was worse than the Mahsuds. There would obviously again—and lastingly this time—be very little room to move. But that is to be expected on Delkarian railway journeys. The maximum of luggage somehow gets in among the passengers, the minimum into the van, always on much the same pretexts, with similar lavish apologies, as if the circumstances were quite exceptional; and eventually, with similar polite resignation, the fact is accepted by all.

Readjusting ourselves, we settled to our 26-hours' trundle across the plain—a plain which, with gigantic monotony, stretches far beyond Lahore, all the way in fact from Karachi to Calcutta and indeed further, perhaps 2,000 miles—a daunting thought in English terms.

Here in Lower Sind its surface is sandy, almost desert. Sunglare beat back from it; the horizon shimmered a little as if through rippling water. Above arched a sky of hard empty blue. Camels could sometimes be seen wandering disconsolately among thorny kikar trees. The train's movement pulled spindly date-palms into view brandishing mop-like summits in the wind, or small green carpets of bright spring wheat; or mud-coloured houses grouped round the white dome and minarets of a village mosque.

We passed a brickyard from which rose a stove-pipe chimney buttressed by wires. Its smoking lip had been adorned with a flimsiness in cut iron, rusty now: the Pakistani crescent and star, put up doubtless during the first enthusiasms of nationhood. Birds appeared: black, fork-tailed drongoes or king-crows, with darting

flight; brilliant little coppery-green fly-catchers on the telegraph-wires; the vivid distant wing-flash of a blue jay. What had looked like a dense leaf-cluster on a tamarisk tree burst featherily asunder; it was a flock of green parakeets. Sometimes the outlook through the tinted panes became thickened, as by fog; the train had been engulfed in its own dust.

At every major station people rushed to the next compartment, shouting slogans. Rural Sindi humanity displayed itself specially today, in excited, colourful crowds. Self-important local leaders fussed along the platform bearing garlands of sweet-smelling white or golden flowers. These were respectfully offered when, in response to the clamour, Miss Jinnah duly opened her door, a thin figure in lavender-grey. She spoke a few words, smiled or nodded, then usually withdrew. But sometimes there were formal addresses to be listened to. In one of these, delivered by a big man who said he was a tonga-driver,[1] she was besought, next time, to stay—"but not with rich people, stay with us."

Next morning at Multan she descended amidst a huge welcoming throng, held back by police. The variety of the people's bobbing peering headdresses behind the barrier of khaki uniform was richly Pakistani: high, starchily-pleated townsmen's turbans, like cockatoos' crests; villagers' turbans, bundled untidily on; red, betasselled fezzes; Jinnah caps of genuine or bogus astrakhan; brown woollen Swati caps with a brim, popular when cloth-shortage made turbans hard to get; little white "pork pie" caps, of the type favoured by maulvis,[2] decorated with gold thread. In Asia hats for men are almost as important as for women in Europe.

Between Multan and Lahore, bereft of the political excitements next door, we traversed the richest land in West Pakistan, the area of the canal colonies, farmed before Partition mainly by Sikhs. These excellent cultivators, by the beginning of 1948, had all had to go; probably not a Sikh remained in the Province. I had supposed that the Afghan general, being Asian, would know about such things, and about the recent total closure of the land-frontier near Lahore; but he seemed as unaware of recent Delkarian happenings as people are in Europe. It was very sad to hear about, he diplomatically observed.

[1] Tonga: a hired pony-trap
[2] Muslim theologians

In the canal colonies everything is big: the heavily-built men in lungis[1] or pajamas; the massive humped oxen; the vast wheat-fields; the fertile mango groves, lavishly powdered at this season with pale greenish blossom. Near Kissan we entered miles of orange orchards, the ripening globes already aglow in the dark foliage. There were crow-pheasants here, bulky birds with brown body and black tail.

Figures in the fields or on the tree-bordered roads wore brilliant colours: flame-yellow, green, scarlet mixed with black, deep blue, in clashing contrast on turban, lungi, or out-hanging shirt. A fine flashy young peasant bestrode a pony, his wife behind shrouded in a white burqa, meekly clutching him. In the East it is the men who go in front; the men who wear the gay clothes. A dust-patch in the quiet evening air showed where cattle were being driven slowly home along a rutted path. The dry empty sky, mauve and darkening already through the Eastern window, remained honey-coloured in the West. Then the sun, like an orange as the Afghan general gravely pointed out, began disappearing in the haze.

As before in Lahore, I was to stay with Akhtar Husain. We had been junior officials together in Delhi 20 years ago. Now he was Financial Commissioner. Until a few days before he had also been on the tribunal investigating Mr Liaquat Ali Khan's murder. This had made me hesitate to suggest myself as a guest; I wrote from Karachi, saying that an ex-journalist as visitor might be awkward. He wired in reply: "Of course stay with us no nonsense."

So I became enclosed once more in the warm hospitality of a Pakistani family. My nephew Hamid, Akhtar's second son,[2] was at the station to meet me, handsomer than ever, small, broad-shouldered, bright-eyed. His silky thread of moustache had grown. All the family were at home, he said, including his brother Akbar, a flight-engineer in the Pakistani Air Force.

Last time I stayed with them, Hamid's blood had been continually boiling about Kashmir. As we got into the car I asked whether it was doing so still. He said: "Sometimes; not so much though."

[1] A kind of male skirt; called a sarong in Malaya. A cylinder of coloured cotton, twice the body's width, doubled over itself and tied round the waist

[2] See footnote on p. 63

This, I thought, tallied with my impressions in Karachi of the prevailing Pakistani mood; emotion had ebbed, temporarily at least.

Nevertheless, Karachi was remote from the trouble-zone; Lahore much closer to it. As we motored to Akhtar's house we passed military vehicles in convoy, their headlamps strung along the straight road as far as the eye could see. They were proof of the continuing tension on the frontier, less than 20 miles away. The troops wore battle-kit, with metal helmets; camouflage nets were out.

It was disgusting. Hamid's young blood might periodically get hot at the thought of India's hold on Srinagar; my own ran cold at these fresh signs of Indo-Pakistani estrangement. The two countries had massed their Armed Forces here, yet they should have been friends, should have been helping one another in defence; that was the assumption of the 1947 experiment. They should have been bending nearly all their limited resources to their huge internal problems; lessening poverty, curbing disease, building houses and roads and schools, growing more food. Instead, they frittered them away in these lavish military preparations against one another. It made their membership of the Commonwealth farcical.

The point re-emphasized itself, a few days later, when I lunched with the Deputy High Commissioner for India in Lahore, Mr Banerji and his wife, a friendly pair. Armed Pakistani police were camped outside their house; I had seen a similar elaborate guard always over the Pakistani High Commissioner in Delhi. Doubtless a reason for their still being posted there was to prevent assault by extremists—for some time after Partition a real risk. But the main motive now was probably watch, not ward.

That Indian diplomatists in Pakistan, and Pakistani ones in India, should have lived lives more harshly restricted than Anglo-American diplomatists in Russia is an ironical item in Commonwealth history, little known. There was recently a time, Mr Banerji told me, when he could only leave Lahore after a week's notice, and with a platoon of Pakistani troops. His Pakistani counterpart at Jullundur in India suffered likewise.

But Lahore in spring, politics or no, is delicious. My stay was only an interlude between journeys, and the coming one, in a

military transport-plane, promised to be exciting. It kept being put off from day to day, owing first to bad weather, then to engine trouble. But so charming was this city, and the household I was in, that I felt almost happy at the delays.

Akhtar's wife, when I first met her years ago a shy person just out of purdah, was now an accomplished hostess, still with a girlish laugh, but with four grown-up children. With Akbar, the eldest, I enjoyed talks about aircraft. Jamila, pretty and vivacious, dressed in the Punjabi style; a muslin scarf draped across her bosom, its end flung over the shoulders, a coloured woollen jumper with a little jewellery, and sometimes a kurta or overvest; and white pajama-trousers. It is the handsomest feminine dress in the world—better even than the sari.

The family were recently back from Europe. They told me how foreign they had felt on the Continent, how at home in Britain—the converse of my own feeling. All of us, it was pleasant to reflect, were products of a joint Anglo-Delkarian civilization.

In March the nights at Lahore are cool, the afternoons agreeably warm; blossom scents the air. At dawn, the gentle notes of doves and hoopoes rouse one. Other birds were nesting. In a shisham tree by the road outside a vulture had built. As I set off for my walks it peered lugubriously from its big bundle of sticks. Blue jays were in their mating frenzy, performing their wonderful stunting, grunting flights. They stalled, rolled, spun. One movement, as Akbar said, was pure dive-bomber.

Along the canal bank, the tall silk-cotton trees, with buttressed grey boles, were in profusion of scarlet blossom. The flowers stuck out brilliantly from bare branches; the new leaves would come later.

Villagers wearing coloured shawls swung their legs at evening on the balustrade of a bridge. There was a murmur of gossip. A hookah was being smoked, its aromatic fumes over-sweet. A youth arrived on a bicycle, dropped off, clasped one of the seated people—a youth too—in the conventional Muslim greeting, which quickly assumed an ardour almost sexual, bare brown arms entwining his friend; it culminated in a closely-applied, prolonged kiss on the forehead. I had never seen this before. The recipient, seated on the balustrade at the outset of the embrace, his arms dangling, had no scope for movement, and remained amiably

passive. Presumably it was the so-called Persian kiss, said to be characteristic of the Punjab. It had been pretty to watch in the slanting, golden light, against a background of foliage and white masonry.

Green parakeets dashed screeching across the twilit sky, their long tails rigid. By the next bridge a singer of religious poems and two drummers sat in the dust. I went back in gathering darkness. The moon came up. White blossom on a small orange tree perfumed the air.

As I paused at the door, beautifully piercing the silence came the purity of a passing villager's flute; a few simple notes, repeated. The small, clear sound afloat in the night wrung the heart; all life's pathos somehow lay in it.

"I don't really care for wallowing in my own dissolved filth; it's barbaric!" That was in Delhi in 1931. My first Indian friend was talking of British bathing habits. As usual, we were in hot argument.

Outraged, I demanded what he meant. He explained. Listening, astonished—for I had never considered the matter before—I could not deny that, in theory, there seemed some truth in what he said.

"Yes," he went on with nationalist glee, "you British are barbaric."

No Englishman, new to the country, could have had a luckier friendship. Personally we delighted in one another; politically we were in continuous dispute. I learned much from him.

"Well, if you feel like that, why don't you take a shower?"

It nearly floored him; but he was quick. "They're seldom fitted. Besides, they're modern; they're probably American. Typical of you British is the old tin tub, what you call the bath, using one word for two different things—muddle-headed as usual. You wallow in it. It's revolting."

The principles of Indo-Pakistani or Delkarian bathing are two. Fresh running water, not stagnant water, must throughout be on the body; and the private or normally dirtier parts, such as the feet, are dealt with last.

Standing now in my Lahore bathroom, which in one British sense was bathless, I recalled that 1931 episode. In theory the cleaner, the Delkarian method in practice has drawbacks when one is out of training. It needs acrobatics.

Nude, equipped with a handled mug, before me two pails of water, one hot, one cold, I balanced on a wooden board, set within a shallow sunken enclosure in the cement floor, out of which ran a vent-pipe. I filled the mug with water, drawn separately from the pails to form the right mixture of temperatures; then I leant slightly back, raised my arms, and poured the water over my head, or, better, into the cavity at the root of the throat. It enclosed the whole body momentarily like a warm glove, a delicious feeling not normally got in European-style bathing. It splashed a lot, but the bathrooms are built for that.

Undeniably, however, it was also rather hard work.

Except for his absurd jealous glowerings at Gulmar, Rahim throughout the trip had been at his best; more punctual than usual, less financially chaotic, very efficient with the details of the journey. Bumbling affectionately about, his big-boned body knocking things over, interjecting startling remarks, banging doors, he seemed always half-aware that these might be our last travels together, and must be made the most of, in mutual fondness and good company.

He gets no joy from flying—and cannot understand how I do. For, like him, I admit that it scares me. Discussing in ribald fashion the Hindu doctrine of transmigration one day, he exclaimed: "If you were a Hindu, Sahib, when you're dead you'd become a bird!"

But Rahim gets airsick. This humiliation first befell him after his baby was born on the verandah of my Calcutta flat during the riots. At about that time I had to visit our Delhi office, and suggested that he might take the opportunity to get his family home to safety in the far North-West. Trouble in Calcutta and elsewhere seemed likely to go on.

"But I couldn't take them by train, Sahib; they'd be butchered." It was perhaps true, even between Calcutta and Delhi. Moreover trains had practically stopped running between Delhi and Lahore.

"You needn't. We'd fly them. You'd all come with me to Delhi by plane; then I'd have them flown to Lahore, where probably you could get a relative to meet them."

And so it was arranged. The Calcutta-Delhi journey happened to be bumpy. Rahim vomited. His family did not; the baby crowed with delight. This ignominy, added to his other pre-

judices, made him disapprove strongly of aviation except as a practical means to some very evident end.

Nevertheless, when I travelled by air he nearly always, though disliking it, wanted to come too. He would be flying again soon.

Chapter 7

HIMALAYAN FLYING

AT last that port engine had been set right, and we were off—though so late that we would not get beyond 'Pindi today. The main thrill would come tomorrow.

I was en route in an R.P.A.F. Bristol Freighter from Lahore to Gilgit. It was March 11. I was going simply for the flight's sake—which to Rahim's practical mind was lunacy—and would be there two hours at most, then return to 'Pindi. I planned to go back to stay in Gilgit later, and move on further North if I could.

Both aeronautically and politically, this first Gilgit flight would be an adventure. Accounts had reached me of the route, said to be about the most spectacular and risky in the world, little publicized hitherto because of Pakistani military security. The map made plain that, after leaving 'Pindi, we would traverse some terrific scenery, dominated on one flank by the 26,600-ft. bulk of Nanga Parbat. Further, the Freighters, I gathered, were not exactly the ideal aircraft for this service, having no de-icing gear and a low ceiling. Normally they did not manage to get much above 12,000 ft., wriggling along the Indus gorge. The route, moreover, lacked meteorological stations.

Politically also the trip would be an adventure, for a reason personal to myself. Gilgit is in Pakistani-held Kashmir; and during my editorship, from the start of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, I had on principle refused to set foot in any part of the disputed principality.

"Come along, Stephens," the Sikh general had said in 1947, soon after the fighting began. "See what our chaps are doing. You're editor of an important paper; we might lay something on. We know you've been a war correspondent, and like being with the troops."

It was tempting. He was conveying an official invitation from the Indian authorities, and happened to be my friend.

"You won't mind my going round to the other side to see what's happening there too." I put it casually as a statement, not a query.

He glared.

I laughed. "I knew you'd look like that."

He laughed too.

"Certainly, then, I won't try to go round to the other side. We publish in India, so you'd be entitled to object. But as that's so, I can't come to your side either, though I long to. It would mean politically committing ourselves, and we're British-edited and British-owned. We're not taking sides in this dispute. It's outrageous—practically a war between two Dominions."

But now, having retired from editing, I was free. For the first time since Partition, I might tomorrow be on Kashmiri soil.

The cargo would be loaded at 'Pindi. Today the Freighter was almost empty. There would be five men aboard: pilot Mahmud Hussain, navigator Aurangzeb Khan, Rahim, Gulmar and myself.

Already I felt I knew Mahmud and Aurangzeb well. The vexatious delays owing to the engine-fault had brought us together.

Mahmud was a person you instinctively trusted. He was rather like one of my war-time R.A.F. friends, a small, quiet, unassuming Scot who had flown me on the Calcutta-Delhi route in Hudsons. You felt sure he would be good in a crisis.

And, poor chap, like most of the Pakistanis I had been with, he was a displaced person, a refugee. He had lost home and property in U.P., his whole existence was uprooted; but I heard no hint of complaint. Delkarians in general I believe take calamity better than Europeans; they seem to find deeper reserves of philosophy to draw on. Some would call this fatalism, dismissing with glib disparagement an important cultural contrast. Whatever it is, it gives strength.

Aurangzeb, a friendly good-looking youngster, only about 20, was gay company.

The Freighter had four passenger seats on the starboard side aft. Otherwise its big fuselage was a hollowness of metal girders. I put Rahim and Gulmar by the two windows and took an aisle-side seat beside Gulmar, who had not flown before. I wanted to watch him; he was agog with boyish interest. He wears his hair long and bobbed in Mahsud style, the back of his neck shaven. As we accelerated, and he craned to see, his eager face was lost to view; only the bobbed black locks and a film of downy hair on

his ear-rim remained visible, silhouetted against the dusty perspex.

At the moment of take-off, however, Rahim turned. He leant over his chair, looked me in the eyes, and smiled.

"Sahib, now you're a bird!"

Becoming airborne emotionalizes me always. As he said this the bodily wall dividing us collapsed; we became for a poised second one person, our 14-years' companionship perfected.

The afternoon was clear. Soon there appeared what I had been hoping for: a row of irregular tiny glistening teeth, immensely far away, poking themselves up behind the hard lip of the horizon. It was the main range of the Himalaya above Pathankot in East Punjab, over a hundred miles off.

In winter and spring the chance of this unique panorama spices air-travel in Northern Delkaria, for the main routes stretch parallel with the mountains for a great distance, from Peshawar nearly as far as Calcutta. One waits excitedly for the first glimpse of that exquisite remote serration, that pinnacled blue-and-silver splendour, wondering how good the visibility and sun-angle will be.

Today conditions were ideal. All the way to 'Pindi the distant range stood to starboard, in superb clarity, the finer details of shadow-cleft and shining snowfield sharpened by the slanting light of late afternoon.

Below, map-like, spread the green-and-tawny plain. Straight canals, straight tree-bordered roads sliced through patchy quilts of wheatfield and plough-land. On the roads crawled occasional tiny motor-beetles. Ox-wagons and minute human figures down there seemed static. Along a railway-track a black articulated metal caterpillar, its head smoke-tufted, dragged itself laboriously along.

Water-logging, a product of the irrigation-canals, is a problem in the Punjab. Moisture, seeping through ill-made early canal linings, has raised the water-table, throwing to the surface salts, which cause loss of fertility. Noticeable from car or train, these white, sterile patches become much more so from the air. Parts of the rich plain seemed ravaged as by some dire agricultural skin-disease, a ghastly leprosy.

A populous earth-hued town speckled with white mosques

PLATE 9. In the Bristol Freighter's cockpit at dawn: Pilot Mahmud Hussain, just before our first take-off for Gilgit

PLATE 10. Officer of the Military Police at Pindi, with starched and pleated turban

and red municipal buildings moved into view, asprawl like a starfish, the suburbs straggling out radially along its roaded arms. A low scrub-covered range of ribbed hills at right-angles to our course was then traversed. We flew over the city of Jhelum; its long bridge spanned the great sandy-shored river. Afterwards came more and bigger transverse ranges, some grey, some rust-coloured or ochreous, enfolding little tattered scarves and ribbons of green fertility. This is a short flight; soon we had arrived.

Emerging from the 'Pindi airport I saw leafless trees, and orchards carrying a pink-and-white powdering of new almond blossom. Here at 1,600 ft. the spring, so profuse in Lahore, had scarcely begun.

It is curious how frequently before a flight, especially one at all unusual, conversation turns, apparently undirected, to crashes and disasters. At dinner that night there was debate on whether road-travel or air-travel is the safer. Air companies' reassuring statistics, one of us asserted, are bogus. They take whole populations as their basis, necessarily a fallacy. The actual air-travelling public must be quite small—the upper class of officials and professional and mercantile people. The great bulk of the public stays aground. How many of my friends, I was asked, had been killed in road crashes and in air crashes?

Totting up, I found with wry concern that whereas the first category totalled 3, the second—exclusive of war-casualties—was over 20. Rahim and Gulmar, I privately decided, should stay in 'Pindi tomorrow, unless they specially clamoured to come.

Driving to the airport again at dawn next day, it became unpleasantly obvious that the weather had changed. There was a smudgy sky; over the foothills grey cloud was trailing rain-curtains. This would mean riskier going, and spoil at least some of the view, said to be so grand.

By the roadside was something I had overlooked last evening: the corpse of an aircraft, wingless, a broken body only. Reaching our Freighter before the crew's arrival, I climbed in to leave my coat. The interesting nature of our cargo then disclosed itself: nothing but petrol, the floor stacked high with filled cans of it.

Mahmud and Aurangzeb now walk across the tarmac, carrying

kit. Another blue-uniformed boy is with them, even younger than Aurangzeb. They introduce him, the met. officer. We remember one another; last year he had been a cadet when I visited the R.P.A.F. College at Risalpur.

The met. reports, Mahmud says, are so uncertain that we must bring him, to consult should we think of turning back. Mahmud, however, is eager to get through today. A signal has come; our cargo of fuel is wanted urgently. It has been much delayed already by the previous storms and engine-trouble. "It will make a nice fizz if we crash", flippantly remarks Aurangzeb.

The Freighter's face beneath its cockpit-eyes had been open in a wide-jawed smile to take in the load of petrol-cans. Now it shuts. I shake hands with Rahim, his big-boned grip encloses mine. I climb in; and am forthwith invited forward to the co-pilot's seat beside Mahmud for the trip. What joy! Aurangzeb and the met. officer sit behind.

We lumber off down the runway, swing round, halt for the final engine-test, and as we do this the sun, just risen, shines on Mahmud. I snap his concentrated face as he fingers the controls—a good portrait, I think.[1] Then take-off, with a glimpse, just after, of two men astride little donkeys beneath us, their startled faces upturned.

We aim straight at the range of low, forest-topped hills to the North. As always at first in mountain flying, I get the illusion that we can't clear them; to the amateur, heights and climb-rate are deceptive. Already dark storm-curtains are pendant from the dubious grey heaven, with bigger hills ahead, and snow remotely visible. I find I haven't brought my scarf forward to the cockpit, also have forgotten to use the lavatory; but am so absorbed that I ignore both. The engines are running sweetly as yet, but horrid chasms open close below.

Now the Indus comes in sight, still quite wide and shallow here, with tributaries entering from deeply-eroded hills. There is a momentary bumping as we penetrate a tiny self-contained rain-cloud. A railway is identifiable, snaking away towards Abbottabad: pale buildings clustered on dark ground. We bump again, less explicably in a clear sky; altitude 9,000 ft., still climbing. Aurangzeb in a friendly way, just behind, shouts information in my ear. "The Black Mountains ahead!" He wears no helmet.

[1] See Plate 9

A lock of hair keeps falling over his forehead; impatiently he flings it back.

The dial shows 11,000 ft. A steep, snow-powdered, forested crest soars on our left. Mahmud's little gloved hand fondles the levers and our climb ceases. A shaft of sunlight arrives. On our right much bigger snow-peaks emerge, then wrap themselves again in cloud. Ahead is a grey misty bumpiness; we edge left to avoid it, pass very low over a snow-topped hill; beneath I see sunlit green deodars, vertical and tall on the slopes. A horrid blackness impends on our right, then moves away from us or we from it, and for a while we proceed in clear tranquil air. Mahmud sings. We are over the winding Indus now; it is narrow and swift, sunk deep in a grey cleft, the glacial jade-green waters sometimes white-streaked with rapids.

The gorge narrows yet more; mountains press in on either side, cloud-topped, they are bigger, closer. There is a sense of having entered some gigantic corridor, with white walls only occasionally glimpsed. Mahmud has lovely long eyelashes. I feel cold, nearly numb. I wish I'd brought that scarf. A vulture on stiff brown sunlit wings—it seems absurdly tiny—slips away on grey air below our port engine.

We're right in the gorge now; I don't like it. Cloud-veils drape most of the peaks, but sometimes tremendous grey presences, far higher than ourselves, disconcertingly stand forth on our right; they have glaciers on their knees. We've descended to 8,500 ft.—why, I don't know. The cleft below is a very steep-sided V; it disdains to shallow into any gentle grassy U, and falls sheer, all rock, to the jade-hued water. We and the cleft together apparently now aim blankly at a huge solid tawny mountain-mass, its upper half snow, its lower hideously scree-streaked. Presumably we must be nearing the great Chilas bend. Yes, yes, it opens up; the Indus suddenly swings away at 45°, ourselves with it. We skim over a tooth-topped crag; on the far side appear conifer-boughs loaded with snow, quite close.

Mahmud decides he wants a walk, passes the controls to me, a thrill. I keep her steady, attempt no rash movements. After a while Aurangzeb takes over, smiles engagingly, smooths back his hair. The valley has much widened, the river here runs for a while between sandbanks, a surprisingly gentle scene. Ahead, that tiny green rectangle of fertility is Chilas. Mahmud, back, points

to a place below of historic interest for his squadron, where not long ago a Freighter crashed. On the right Nanga Parbat's summit remains obstinately invisible, shrouded in greyness; part of her gigantic flanks only can be discerned.

The gorge contracts again now, bends leftwards. From the grey body of a mountain protrude two curious snow-hillocks, rounded and nippled like a woman's breasts. Somewhere behind the rock-masses to the right winds the road to Astór, and the cease-fire line, with Gurais and Indian-held Kashmir beyond. We've dropped now to about 5,500 ft.; despite the met. report we seem to be making Gilgit all right, a good ride—though what of the return? As yet it's only 8.45 a.m.; a turbulent build-up is a possibility, when the earth gets warmer.

Below a well-made bridge comes into view, a straight seemingly motorable road. Such things have been non-existent anywhere in the great tumbled wilderness behind us since a few minutes after we left 'Pindi. The valley-floor widens once more; two streams dramatically fuse, one earthy-brown, one azure-blue. Now the airstrip can be seen, with tents beside it, ending in a cliff above the river. We circle the little town; glimpse mud walls, a parade ground, the pale boles of leafless poplars, fruit-blossom, willows just afroth with their first green foliage.

Remembrance of my first brief stay in Gilgit is blurred. I was thinking too much of the joys of our just-finished flight, and of its one disappointment—that Nanga Parbat had withheld herself. She is probably the world's loveliest mountain; certainly the most terrible among those yet intimately known—a killer. More trained climbers have lost their lives on her than on any other. That is largely because of her loneliness. Unlike the great peaks of the Karakoram, or those of the central Himalayan chain between Kamet and Kanchenjunga, she soars in isolation. No summit of comparable size stands anywhere near. As a result, she has a peculiar capacity to attract or create sudden overwhelming storms.

My only close experience of her was a treasured memory. I am no mountaineer; but owing to an unusual configuration of ground any ordinary healthy person can walk to within about 3½ map-miles of her summit. He may stand on an accessible vantage-point by a glacier-edge at only 12,000 ft.; and above him towers

the gigantic 26,600-ft. mass, in precipice after dizzying precipice, so near and at such an angle that gazing at it cricks the neck. This point is on the eastward, Astór side, at the upper limit of a ravine called the Rupal Nala, on the side opposite to the one we approached today in the Freighter; the manifestly unclimbable side, which no mountaineer, presumably, ever considered trying.

Convalescing from dysentery in the summer of 1940, after travelling into Astór via Tragbal and Gurais, I had camped in the ravine at 10,000 ft., about nine map-miles from the top. Time was short, for the war was on, and I was nearly well again, and they needed me back. It had been arranged that I should rise at 3.30 a.m., walk to the 12,000-ft. vantage-point at the ravine-head, and if, owing to weather, there was no view, then the opportunity would have altogether gone. For I had to turn back that day towards Srinagar and the plains.

Peering out at 3.30 a.m., I found thick blanketing mist. We plodded forth, however, with lanterns. Mist wreathed everything. Hopes slowly ebbed as we stumbled up the stony track. Dawn came; but there was no lifting at all of the dense vapour.

Breakfast was eaten at the final vantage-point in dank greyness. Suddenly came a puff of wind, a clearance, and with breath-taking rapidity veil after veil of clinging cloud was ripped off the great rock faces, off the series of incredible soaring precipices, until, within a few awed moments, the entire gigantic splendour of this most beautiful, most appalling of mountains had revealed itself to us, brilliant in the sunshine.

Such an experience was unrepeatable. Nevertheless, after leaving the Freighter, talking on the airstrip to the officers who had come to supervise our cargo's removal, I still felt downcast that Nanga Parbat should have kept wholly hidden. It was the blemish in a fine flight; and the met. report implied that clouds would be thicker on the return.

A jeep arrived, bringing the Political Agent's chief clerk. Would the crew and I please come to breakfast? The P.A. was waiting in his bungalow. We were whirled off, through orchards, between tall mud walls; through the little bazaar, and up a steep slope. There was much dust. The wind blew cold. The people wrapped themselves against it in the curious Gilgiti cloaks, whose long sleeves seem vestigial in function, hanging down empty.

Most also wore the rimmed woollen local caps; but some had big Kashgari caps of fur, very Central Asian.

Khan Faridullah Shah, the P.A., a jovial Pathan, almost overbore us with hospitality. Guests were rare, he loved having them, he said; and very obviously it was so. He took us enthusiastically round his garden, showed us his fruit trees, his fish-pool; conducted us over his comfortable house, then plied us with a huge and excellent breakfast, finishing with a special kind of pear, stored in snow throughout winter.

We were staying the night, of course. No? Why not? We must; where was our kit? Really we couldn't? Well, we must unquestionably remain to lunch; it had been ordered. He wouldn't hear of our going sooner.

Tactfully but firmly, and with regret, Mahmud dealt with this. It couldn't have been easy; he was a young flight-lieutenant, and a Political Agent is an important person. He was very sorry, but the met. report when we left 'Pindi had been disquieting. We should have been in the plane already; the jeep must leave the bungalow without fail in five minutes.

Precisely to Mahmud's schedule the Freighter took off again, heading apparently slap into a gigantic wall of brown rock. Frightened by our noise, a flock of duck below us took off too, skimming prettily from the river's azure waters. It had become brighter. Most of the heavy cloud had inexplicably gone. A thin high haze only half-veiled the sun. Faridullah during that morning must have thought scathingly of meteorologists, for until some hours after we had landed in 'Pindi, when the promised three-days' storm did violently arrive, there was quiet clear weather.

I had been put in the cockpit again beside Mahmud. As the Freighter climbed, many fine mountains invisible two hours ago now displayed themselves. We were in luck. And after about 15 minutes, as we turned to starboard following the Indus, there suddenly Nanga Parbat was, in enormous solitary grandeur, almost her entire westward surface bare, utterly outclassing the other snow-peaks within our big field of view, dwelling, it seemed, in a separate dimension. A muslin-like wisp of vapour draped her throat; a wavering snow-plume blew from her mighty crest. And above this, detached like a halo, was a small hard-

edged cloud, perhaps later in the day to prove a thunder-maker.

Humble, we crept at 11,000 ft. above the river-channel, the whole Eastern sky filled by the vastly loftier mass of her icy pinnacles; not dazzlingly silhouetted against deep tropical blue, as I had seen her in 1940, but in a pale, mild, deceptively English light, filtered through films of pearly cirrus.

Gradually she passed behind us. Mahmud now began cutting his corners. He knew what he was doing, could from experience calculate to within a few feet; but I did not, and was scared.

Instead of methodically following the channel where it bent leftwards, we aimed at a snowy shoulder. Once again I suffered the novice's optical illusion that what lay ahead was unclearable. As we skimmed over—it disclosed itself as a horrid knife-edged ridge—I held my breath, not only because of our nearness—we seemed almost to scrape the surface—but because of the violent down-draught which I expected. I had heard much of these horrors of Himalayan turbulence, in which a plane flying close over warm rock or snow may be suddenly sucked down hundreds of feet. Instead, we remained almost steady, trembling scarcely at all; and soon Mahmud had evidently decided to repeat the performance, rightwards this time. He did so, dramatically. On the third occasion we went through a little-frequented 11,000-ft. pass, so near that each separate footprint of the three walkers who had used it since the last snowfall could be traced, climbing and descending.

As we came in to land at 'Pindi, I remember seeing a pool in which buffaloes wallowed; many-coloured washing was laid out to dry. Disembarking, I asked Mahmud why there had been almost no downward suction during our corner-cutting.

"But the snow hadn't got sun-warmed", he explained. "As you saw, the clouds had only just cleared."

Conditions in fact had, without my realizing it, happened to be perfect for our little homeward excitement. An hour later, if the sun stayed up, the air around those rocky snow-clad mountains might have been in wild commotion.

It is heartrending to reflect that I can never see Mahmud again. He was killed in a crash soon after I left Pakistan.

Chapter 8

SECOND CAPITAL

MY home in 'Pindi was the home of the Master-General of the Ordnance and his wife, Major-General and Begum Shahid Hamid. It was the home also of my nephews Hasan and Ali, aged nine and three; of my nieces Shahnaz and Shama, aged seven and four; of a pair of long-legged cranes, who gruntingly paraded the lawns, demanding to be fed on bits of chapatti,[1] which they neatly caught in snapping mandibles; of a tame baaing fat-tailed sheep or dumba; of a very tame and silly duck which, if you laid her on her back and poised a pebble on her breast, was mysteriously unable to regain her feet; and of tame rabbits whose precise number never seemed clearly known from day to day, they were having so many babies.

Strictly, this delightful household was not in 'Pindi but in Chaklala, about five miles out—a place at which I first stopped in 1945, en route by air from Delhi to Peshawar. Alighting, a movement aloft had caught my eye. Against a background of azure sky and camel-coloured hill twelve beautiful white mushrooms swayed. Chaklala, I then recalled, was an important war-time paratroop-training centre. Hundreds of young men soldiering in those days, now scattered in civilian life throughout the Commonwealth, must remember it.

Like so many now holding high office in Pakistan, Shahid Hamid was pleasantly young, only about 40; he was also handsome. So was his wife—in feature, movement, voice. A Westernized Pakistani lady, she had been trained as a doctor. She and Shahid were both displaced persons, refugees from India. I had first met them in Delhi before Partition, when he was Military Secretary to Field-Marshal Auchinleck.

Visitors of many kinds streamed through their hospitable house, and I quickly imbibed the atmosphere of Pakistan's second capital, which 'Pindi is. Military headquarters had been there from the start, not at Karachi. Afterwards civilian departments were added, notably the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs. Moreover

[1] Delkarian unleavened bread

PLATE 11

Baa-ing fat-tailed sheep or 'dumba'

PLATE 12. My 'nephew' Hasan, General and Begum Shahid Hamid's son

since early in 1949 the U.N. observers supervising the Kashmir armistice had kept their head offices there, except in summer when most of them went to Srinagar—much to the envy of the Pakistanis, politically and climatically.

'Pindi seems much more British than Karachi, where the many Embassies create a diffused cosmopolitanism. The Pakistani Armed Forces still keep many British technical experts. Moreover the senior Pakistani officers themselves appear of very British mould compared with the civilian officials. Military training imprints itself on people strongly. In accent and turn of phrase, in the kind of jokes they like, or their mental approach to a problem, these soldiers and sailors and airmen, whatever their inward thoughts, were outwardly patterned on their former comrades-in-arms from an island 4,000 miles away. Close your eyes at a Pakistani party in 'Pindi, and you might almost suppose yourself in Aldershot.

An incident rather absurdly illustrating this happened the previous year, when I was still with "The Statesman." Walking one evening on the hotel lawn with a Pakistani friend, I saw a dinner-jacketed figure approach. My companion introduced us; I missed the name, however. When in Pakistan I seek Pakistani company and tend to avoid British; what is travel for if one hobnobs with fellow-countrymen? I rather resented the intrusion and the dinner-jacket therefore, as also the woof-woof manner and handlebar moustache. An exaggerated Sandhurst product, date about 1925, I thought; real period-piece, ought to be kept under a glass case.

He barked at me: "Oh, editor of an Indian paper?"—stressing the adjective in a way I thought slighting.

Provoked, I was rude. "Be damned to that; a British-owned paper, please."

We had quite a set-to, out there in the twilight. And when, having made it up, we re-entered the hotel, I found to my consternation that he was not British at all. He was a Pakistani brigadier.

But there had been changes since my last Pakistani travels. I became aware of a certain withdrawal on both sides. The British who remained in Pakistan, and others who had come, novices to the country, were less enthusiastic, more detached. There were fewer "Pakistani-British" about.

This type, the Britons so fervent for the smaller new Dominion as to range themselves wholly with her, had been a remarkable by-product of the events of 1947. In part, I suppose, their attitude originated from the previous struggles between the British Raj and the Congress party. Some of them looked upon the Indian leaders now in power at Delhi as permanently their foes; they had bitter remembrance of the party's policies in 1942. But this could hardly be the whole explanation, for the keenest Pakistani-British were usually the youngest.

Several junior officers whom I met on the Frontier and elsewhere in 1948 and 1951 seemed wholly integrated, more Pakistani than the Pakistanis. A captain in the Khyber Rifles, devoted to his Pathans, took me eagerly at prayer-time to the mosque; from his remarks I guessed that, besides having in spirit virtually changed his nationality, he might before long be considering a change of religion. Another in the Pishin Scouts, equally enthusiastic, was wholly absorbed in details of his men's tribal, family and personal affairs. These lads, and others, applied "our" to the Government or Armed Forces of Pakistan as naturally as a Pakistani would. To have said "their", putting a separatist pronoun between themselves and the people they were so fond of, would have outraged their sense of belonging.

At Gilgit in November 1947, when the people decided to repudiate allegiance to the Maharajah of Kashmir on his acceding to India, were two young British officials. Their part in that affair had been a matter of controversy,[1] so when one evening in 1948 they came into the Peshawar Club I felt interested. Moreover their appearance was odd; they were dishevelled, begrimed with soot.

"What have you been doing?" someone asked.

They explained. Going through the bazaar, they had seen the beginnings of a fire. A valuable store was nearby. Nobody was doing anything, so they had organized fire-fighting themselves.

"And we've saved three lakhs for Pakistan!" they declared, with the pride of patriots.

Most of these enthusiasts had gone by 1952. Some had been treated rather ungratefully by the Pakistani Government. The British now in the country were in general more aloof. Few of them seemed likely to say "our."

[1] See also p. 152

For this withdrawal on the British side, psychological and physical, there may have been several reasons. For that similarly perceptible on the Pakistani side there seemed only one, very simple. Like so much else in Delkaria, it sprang direct from the two new Dominions' antagonism. In the same way as Indians, Pakistanis believed themselves altogether right over the matters so bitterly disputed, and especially over Kashmir; and they had been first puzzled, then increasingly indignant and aggrieved, at getting no support at all from Britain—whose one wish now seemed to be to avoid having any policy on Delkarian controversies, though undeniably she bore some historical responsibility for them. Even Australia, which they knew less well, had—they felt—been more honest and forthcoming.

Further—for Pakistanis perhaps have simple minds—many of them were dumbfounded by the decision at the London conference of April 1949 that India, after becoming a Republic and abolishing the insignia of monarchy, could still be in the Commonwealth. They thought this contrary to common sense, a feat of incomprehensible hair-splitting.

Looking back, that date appears a turning-point in Anglo-Pakistani affairs. Before, the people considered their country's membership of the Commonwealth natural; only a small minority imagined it ceasing. The Crown meant something; the Pakistani Armed Forces were proud to use its symbols. Afterwards such sentiments wilted. By 1952, Commonwealth membership was generally looked on from the standpoint of mere expediency. If it could give Pakistan material advantage, especially against India, let it stay; otherwise it could be dropped without a pang. National dignity, in any event, would probably now require that, when the new Constitution was agreed on, Pakistan should become a Republic too, and obliterate Royal insignia.

This loosening of Anglo-Pakistani ties was an outstanding impression of my journey hitherto, as I pondered on what I had seen and heard in three cities. Other impressions, bearing on misfortunes in Pakistan's internal affairs, had also begun to clarify. For example, there was the matter of the riots at Dacca in East Bengal over the State language,[1] which had startled Karachi about the time of my arrival.

[1] i.e. how far Urdu should be given priority there over Bengali

They had been quickly over, and the province was now at peace again, having withstood a crisis. But nothing similar had happened before; it was a very perturbing episode. East Bengal's cultural differences from the rest of Pakistan, and her big distance from it, had always made the structure of the State appear shaky. Many observers believed that East Bengal must eventually break off; forces of history and geography would prove too strong, and snap the fragile new administrative bond. If that happened, however, Pakistan would be so shorn of wealth and population that what remained would not be the world's biggest Muslim nation, but a weak and third-rate Power.

The language riots therefore had brought a formidable latent problem to the surface. The Government would be wise to forget about a State language for a while. India had got into similar but less grave trouble through over-eagerness to popularize Hindi.

Another problem was food. In 1951, when India had again had a sharp food-shortage, Pakistan rejoiced in a bulging surplus, assumed to be perpetual. When I got back eight months later, I was astonished to find talk of deficit—and not talk only. On the Mall in Lahore I passed boarded-up shop-fronts; panes had been smashed in an "atta" riot.[1]

Governments in Delkaria had floundered in statistical uncertainty about food since 1943, the year of the great Bengal famine. It was a subject on which, perhaps with good excuse, I had become a profound and uneasy sceptic. In that tragic summer, amidst mounting evidence of shortage, officials of the British Raj had assured the public—and editors privately—that famine was impossible. The Viceroy of those days, Lord Linlithgow, had formerly been head of a Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture. Yet within a few months about a million people were dead of starvation; the poorest of the poor, many thousands of them, sprawled pitiably over the streets of Calcutta, "the second city of the Empire"; and our articles in "The Statesman", which eventually broke the war-time censorship on outgoing news of these horrors, nearly got me into jail.

On the other hand, in the spring of 1946 Lord Wavell's Government began appealing agitatedly for international aid; they said another famine impended. Little aid was got, owing to shipping shortage and the plight of war-ravaged countries else-

[1] Atta is wheat-flour

where at that time—but no famine ensued, or even serious general scarcity. Similarly India's rapid recent recovery from the difficulties of 1951 had been a surprise.

Excessive exports, administrative over-confidence, bad luck with the weather, hoarding, smuggling across the frontier to India, cultivators' preference for cash-crops to food-crops, perhaps Indian interference with canal-waters; these were doubtless factors in Pakistan's present difficulties, and they might be considered temporary. But was there something more? Had the assumption of 1951 that the country would normally be a surplus food-area been wrong? I thought not; but past acquaintance with Delkarian food crises prevented any certainty. Pakistan's population, like that of other Asian countries, was increasing faster than the known means for increasing food output. Sooner or later, real food shortage seemed inevitable.

Language riots and food riots had been solid realities during February—the month when I returned. Perhaps the accident of timing made them seem too grave. More problematical were attempts to sort out another impression: that Pakistan had somehow lost impetus since May 1951, was faltering in her course. Here, the elements to be unwoven were subtler. At least three strands of ill-consequence could be directly traced to Mr Liaquat Ali Khan's death in October of that year: the numbing shock of the murder itself; bewilderment that its motive remained unexplained; and a general weakening of administrative grip—aggravated perhaps by the fact that the post of Secretary-General, vacated by Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali during the Cabinet reconstruction, remained unfilled.

But the explanation, I felt, was bigger than this, and must be sought further back. The Muslim liberation-movement on the subcontinent had begun much later than the Hindu, had developed faster, and was now naturally enough showing fatigue. There had indeed been many signs of analogous tendencies in India. Newly-won freedom is a heady, invigorating thing; but its effects pass. Popular fervour for independent nationhood had plainly lessened in both countries; the more ignorant saw that the changes had not brought the millennium, and felt defrauded.

During the long period of British rule, what may be termed Opposition-mindedness had become a habit throughout Delkaria; its renewal now was easy, and in Pakistan the transition

from joy to disillusion had been the more abrupt. Externally, so many crises of antagonism with India had arisen that people had become hardened to them; capacity to react was overstrained. Within, the first uprush of enthusiastic energy released among Government servants by quick promotion had spent itself. Further—alarming item—several of the best of them, who had guided their country's affairs through its first critical years, were so overworked that their health was collapsing. Pakistan's proportion of trained administrators was smaller than India's. The resultant shortcomings opened the way for inefficiency and corruption at the lower levels. The public saw this and by rumour expanded it very unpleasantly.

Again, Pakistan's proportion of skilled and experienced politicians was also small; and throughout my journey I was to hear increasing criticism, from military officers, civil servants and the public, of the quality of the Government of Karachi. Affairs appeared to be merely drifting, which was very unhealthy in a new country, they said; not nearly enough firm direction came from the Ministers; sometimes intelligible decisions were impossible to get.

The new State's impressive feats of consolidation against almost overwhelming difficulties since 1947 had indeed proved her right to a place among the nations. She was viable—which at first had been widely questioned. But she had now entered a difficult phase. Sympathetic understanding was the more needed.

While in 'Pindi I was busy arranging the next stages of my journey; and in a world stiff with novel frontiers and formalities travel necessarily requires much organizing. Sometimes you spend so much energy on preparations, on conciliating or circumventing officials or on merely gaining access to them, that you wonder whether any of it will be left when you arrive.

The Pakistani authorities could not have been kinder. But my plans after leaving 'Pindi were at three points unorthodox. I wanted to cross the Kashmir cease-fire line to Srinagar and back; to visit the area North of Gilgit near the frontier of Communist China; and to go to Afghanistan. Inevitably, therefore, I had to spend many hours in offices of various kinds, engaged on minutely-detailed discussions of how these ambitions could be fulfilled.

The discussions often lay exposed to a difficulty characteristic

of Delkaria. It arose from two facts: Delkarians are more sensitive and punctilious in courtesy than Europeans; yet they attach less importance to privacy. A Delkarian official, if you are alone with him and a fresh caller is announced, finds embarrassment in not admitting him too; that the newcomer should have to wait outside seems inhospitable, impolite. Consequently he is apologetically asked in and your talk suffers setback. There are introductions to be got through; cross-currents in the conversation naturally arise; nor is it always easy to discuss your affairs so frankly in a stranger's presence.

Further intrusion comes from the telephone, a menace not peculiar to Delkaria—but here there are pleasant compensations. You arrive by appointment, reckoning to complete your business within a fixed time, having perhaps arranged another appointment afterwards. You have scarcely begun when the bell rings, and perforce you sit fidgeting, while prattle with a third party supervenes. However, though the thread of your business may thus be repeatedly snapped, and by calls which, because of Asian politeness, may last longer than in Europe, to overhear these calls, as willy-nilly you in part do, can be fascinating.

Flowery compliments in Urdu first flow faintly over the wire. With bland official smiles into the mouthpiece, alternating with apologetic personal grimaces to yourself, these are returned. Then, after further courteous exchanges, Urdu as a linguistic medium somehow breaks down, proving inadequate to the matter in hand. Without warning a gust of English interjects itself from one party or the other, and the conversation thereafter shuttles inconsequently back and forth between the two tongues. Delicious combinations of words may be awaited. I took to jotting these down, while striving to settle the more problematical stages of my journey. A fine verbal trophy, obtained in an office which that morning had found itself unusually distraught, was "Aj-kal, hamara daftar men, kuch bari ajib shambles hai."[1]

Household hospitality in Delkaria, like office procedure, lacks British rigidity. This distinction always existed, but rationing in Britain has widened it. British hostesses or housewives, when guests impend, normally expect to know with fair precision their number and time of arrival. They arrange to produce food, too,

[1] Freely translated: "Our office at present is a bloody shambles"

at a prearranged hour. Neither of these things is so in Delkaria, where domestic arrangements are wonderfully elastic. In part this originates from a different attitude towards time, whose importance in Asia is less; in part from contrasts in cooking. European food, once hot, spoils if not eaten promptly; Indian or Pakistani food remains appetizing longer.

And that does not mean that it is inferior. Standard Pakistani khana, as offered in military Messes, may become monotonous; day after day the same curry appears. But the food at some of the parties I was asked to in Pakistani homes would have excited an internationally experienced gourmet. These meals nowadays are usually served on the buffet principle, without formal seating. You wander round a big table, taking your pick from a rich variety of dishes, alluring to eye and nose as well as to mouth. There may be several sorts of kabab—sirhi, shami, others; spiced curd; perhaps curried fish; vegetables, including excellent sagh, a kind of spinach; breadflaps, of course; and sweet crumbly halwa.

While I was staying at the Shahid Hamids' at 'Pindi, there was a wedding reception. A friend was being married, a refugee with no new home yet, so they put theirs at his disposal. The expectation was for about 40 guests; preparations were made accordingly. Instead, more than 70 arrived. The household coped with the extra inflow equably. There was no shortage, no sense at all of strain or fuss. I found it hard to imagine a British family, even before the war, with plenty of servants, contriving this sort of affair so well. Elasticity and ease: these are the qualities of hospitality in Delkaria.

Chapter 9

THE THAL

LIEUTENANT IQBAL IMAM, of the Pakistani Navy, had features of such aristocratic cut, a nose so nobly chiselled, such fine large eyes, such elegantly curved lips, that he alarmed me. For four days or so this superior-looking young man was to be my companion, escort, guide. It was March 14 and we were going to the Thal, while officialdom unravelled the problems raised by my proposed Kashmiri and Afghan journeys.

When the British left the subcontinent, and apparently always before, the Thal had been almost total desert. Now it contained 55,000 settlers, brought in by the Pakistani Government. Within seven years, if plans went well, it would support a rural and urban population of about 270,000, all refugees, displaced persons from India.

It lay on the Westernmost flank of the Punjab, up against the Indus—which would provide the necessary water for irrigation and electricity. The area to be brought under cultivation by 1953-54 was about 700,000 acres, not very big by Delkarian standards, but big by British: larger than County Durham or Cheshire, for example.

Pakistan was very proud of what was being done there. Everyone said I should go. "Whatever happens," I was told, "don't miss the Thal." The Governor-General had stressed the point during my talk with him in Karachi. Akhtar Husain, who as Financial Commissioner was concerned with refugee resettlement, had reiterated it in Lahore. The military people in 'Pindi said it too, with vigour. So much so, in fact, that resistance had been set up. I felt like the tourist who, because all his friends insist on his seeing the Tower of London or the Taj Mahal, refuses to go near it. Kilowatts and cusecs, I protested, baffle me. I would take them on trust; I could read about them.

To no avail. I found myself amiably hustled into the office of Major-General Sher Ali Khan, the Adjutant-General, whose decisive personality fixed it in a twinkling. Transport had been arranged; obviously I couldn't go North without inspecting the

Thal; the weather was just right now—it would be too warm later; I would go under military not civilian auspices, which was proper, for the military had been the pioneers there; Lieutenant Imam would take me, he knew all about it, had been engaged on it from the start.

So there I was, destined for a tour which I had not intended, with this elegantly-featured alarming youth in naval uniform.

We set off for Mianwali next morning in a powerful station-wagon. Heavy rain was falling; a succession of black storms and brilliant blue-and-white intervals pursued us all day. The country to be traversed was new to me. That indeed—besides the general's personality—had been a reason for my resistance collapsing, for my consenting to go; the cusecs and kilowatts might be a bore, but not, I suspected, the landscape and people, either in the Thal or en route.

We would go through the Salt Range, which I had often heard of and wanted to see. There should be much to please the eye, however surfeited with statistics the ear became. The peasants of the Punjab's westerly fringe were said to be very picturesque, particularly now, at the marriage season, and when it was still cool enough for the men to be wrapped in big bright-coloured shawls.

Except for his cap and shoulder badges, Iqbal Imam was no longer visibly naval. He wore khaki slacks; his athletic young torso was clad in a khaki pullover. He proved a friendly, cheerful soul with a keen mind; my alarm had been quite unnecessary. Within half an hour we were talking freely on every available topic and already knew much about one another. Like the flowers, friendships bloom quickly in warm Asian climates.

The country South of 'Pindi is a jumbled plateau, with sudden cliffs and spurs, and occasional ribbed and fluted ravines. The main valley to be crossed, the Sohan, is dramatically sculptured by erosion. Because of the land's rough contours, there is little scope for water conduits. The vivid green wheatfields that we passed were mostly barani—a term meaning dependent for growth not on irrigation but on local rainfall. They were certainly getting it today.

My companion's history was sadly familiar. Working for refugees, he was one himself—from Patiala. The family property

had been lost. Until Pakistan was born he had never supposed that she would be, and did not then concern himself much with politics. Now he said he was fervently Pakistani.

This fervour seemed nationalistic in the Western sense; it apparently had small basis in religion. Like many of the Pakistanis I had been meeting in Karachi, Lahore and 'Pindi, Iqbal was vague about Islamic doctrines. He spoke with indignant contempt of the mullahs. I doubted whether he troubled much to say his prayers. At a Lahore dinner I had heard one young Pakistani, very patriotic, declare frankly that he did not know how to say them. I heard another in 'Pindi profess ignorance of the differences between Sunni and Shia, Qadiani and Ismaili.

It seemed that I, a foreigner, knew more about their country's established Faith than some enthusiastic Pakistanis did, and felt perhaps greater respect for it. Yet Indian critics of Pakistan, such as Pandit Nehru, had throughout contended that the new State depended for its existence on narrow religious fanaticism, artificially whipped up; that the two-nation concept was theocratic. There seemed some profound misunderstanding here.

The Salt Range became remotely visible, an interesting brown smear along the horizon. We rushed through a village: mud huts, humble shops, dominated by a large whitewashed residence with a pillared front.

"What a joy to have won freedom!" exclaimed Iqbal. Startled, for Delkarians have beautiful manners, and are not wont to refer quite so bluntly, when in unfamiliar British company, to the end of British rule, I grunted encouragingly; some reason for this unheralded remark seemed required. "That white house used to be the Hindu bania's,"[1] he said with disgust. "There aren't any of them left in West Punjab now, thank goodness; at last we're free."

The British were forgotten, had not been in his mind at all; I felt almost aggrieved.

As we drove along fine tall men swaggered beside the road, leading groups of swaying camels roped by the nose. In this region, as in much of the Pathan country, it remains the admirable fashion to wear masculine hair bobbed. Untidy rural turbans crowned the head; beneath were the picturesque black locks. A

[1] Moneylender's

coloured shawl was carelessly flung round the shoulders. Then came an out-hanging shirt of some different, clashing hue; white cotton pajamas; bare brown horny ankles; heavy boat-shaped Punjabi slippers. Features were well-cut, handsome; bodies lither, less heavily-boned than in the flat lands near Lahore.

Surprisingly many of the women that we passed were "open faced", unveiled. Some of them balanced on their heads huge drum-shaped wicker baskets, like fantastic sun-hats, beneath which their bodies slid forward with poised grace.

The craggy rampart of the Salt Range now notched all the skyline to the South. Though not high, perhaps never exceeding 5,000 ft., it is spectacular: steep, continuous, almost void of vegetation, a chaos of shattered strata, in parts luridly coloured from weathering of the infiltrated salts. As always in approaching a range, the plain deceptively seemed to dip towards it. Our route over the pass flanked a quiet lake, its blue waters reflecting fat white rolling clouds, and the startling magentas and gamboges of sunlit salt-pockets in the rock. Then the sky blackened again, and we reached Mianwali beneath tremendous thunder-crashes.

A meal finished, we hurried forth to inspect before nightfall the Jinnah Barrage, the crux of the Thal project, where the water for irrigation is channelled off from the Indus—whose course has been bent several miles for the purpose. It is indeed a mighty construction, which I duly admired, peering at the great concrete pillars and iron grilles, pondering over a model which showed how the system of distributaries was to fertilize a vast sterile area. This take-off point for the main canal is at the place where the river bursts out of the 30-miles' cage of the Attock gorge.

As I peered and pondered, my eyes strayed guiltily to the far shore. A beautiful little town, Kalabagh, stood there: rectangular brown houses piled up between the river and a great tawny-yellow, potassium-purple hill, splashed with the outcrops of salt. To its left, by the waterfront, was what seemed a tiny white palace. Might we perhaps go there too?

Yes, indeed; and after brief further intake of irrigational data off we sped, by the road along the barrage-top, to wander happily in the gardens surrounding the Nawab of Kalabagh's rest-house—my supposed palace. White marble steps descended to the lapping wavelets of the river; a marble fountain splashed in the courtyard, and if one wanted shade there was a gigantic

banyan tree to sit beneath, its arms propped on its own root-struts, amidst many pendulous roots-to-be, stretching hairy tentacles earthwards. Orange-blossom and buddleia perfumed the air.

In an adjacent, less noticeable building lived the Nawab, practically besieged, surrounded by watch-towers, high walls, and (it was said) guards with Sten-guns. He and a neighbouring Khan, both Pathans, had long been at feud; it was a famous affair, and though this was not tribal territory he was evidently a person of prudence, who preferred to take no risks.

From this point my recollections of the Thal become fragmentary. I was the subject—not the victim, that would be ungracious—of a conducted tour, done with all the intensity, hospitality, volubility and variety of which Delkaria is capable. For four days, except in bed, I was scarcely alone. In the dak-bungalows[1] at Mianwali and Shahpur, where we stayed, a lively torrent of conversation cascaded round me: sometimes irrigational, but as often anecdotal, philosophical, political—Kashmir being of course a recurrent theme. In the station-wagon, by which we covered a huge mileage, were always additional passengers, experts picked up at different stages of our journey to explain what we saw: at one time the Secretary of the Thal Development Authority himself, Chaudhuri Munir Ahmed; electrical engineers, canal designers, agricultural technicians, tractor organizers, army and navy officers engaged in refugee resettlement.

On the third morning Iqbal as usual kindly enquired how I had slept.

"All right, thanks; but I've got awful indigestion."

His handsome eyes widened in concern.

"Up here", I added, tapping my forehead.

He was delighted, and the pressure of touring and talk thereafter tactfully diminished somewhat.

Conditions at the outset for the Thal pioneers must have been horrible. Even now—and in the cool season, before the fierce winds began—the large as yet untamed tracts of desert were a grim sight. In many places nothing was visible but a sterile wilder-

[1] Rest-houses

ness of white ripple-surfaced dunes, for ever slowly shifting. They had crept across some of the fine new tarred roads, partly blocking them; our car then had to wriggle between roof-high hills of soft sand. They had blocked some of the cement-floored canal distributaries, early ones sited wrongly to the prevailing wind. It was hard to believe that these mobile monsters could ever be fully mastered, be made to settle, spread out and nourish rich crops.

Iqbal gave vivid descriptions of his life with the early immigrants. Sometimes, in scorching heat, a dust-storm would rage ceaselessly for more than a fortnight. Meals could only be taken under a sheet, and even so the teeth gritted continually on sand-grains. When one was actually in the Thal it needed little imagination to appreciate how overwhelming the difficulties must have seemed. The whole undertaking rested on a major act of faith, something of which a new country could be proud.

After the distributaries had been built, and water from the Barrage had started to flow, rows of a gigantic kind of marram-grass were first planted. These became wind-breaks, binding some of the sand into soil. Tree-planting then began, along the hollows between the dunes. In this warm climate, with good water-supply, growth was swift, particularly of shisham, a useful, thick-foliaged hardwood. Planting of groves of fruit trees followed; mangoes, Iraqi dates, many kinds of citrus. The dunes were thus further tamed. Ordinary field-crops became practicable. In parts of the developed area, which had been utter wilderness four or five years before, I saw wheat in fine condition, stretching away apparently without limit. There were model farms, tree nurseries, cattle-breeding stations, poultry-raising establishments.

Villages were strictly planned—wisely so, for civic sense throughout the subcontinent is feeble. The houses were well spaced; no overcrowding was permitted. Some seemed rather grimly fortress-like; the windows had to be small to keep out the blown sand. Each village had its mosque, its school, its co-operative-society building. In many, minor rural industries were fostered, to supplement income in agriculturally slack seasons. At one, I saw over a big, airy building in which curtains, towels and shirt materials were being woven. At another, a diesel power-unit was working the tube-well, a little flour-mill, an oil-crusher, and husking, ginning and carding plants.

PLATE I

Punjabi [illegible] th court [illegible] settlers [illegible]

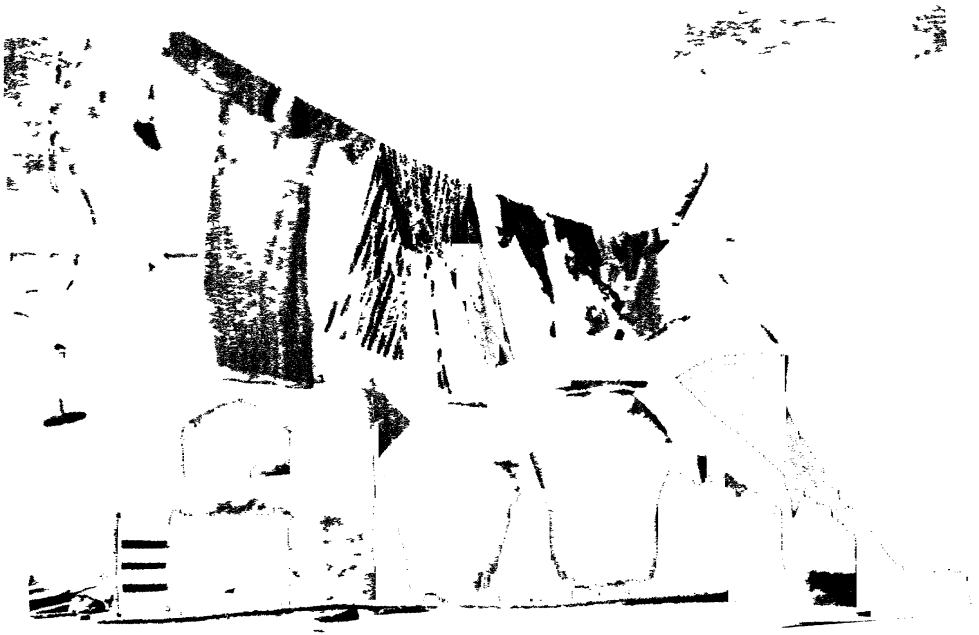


PLATE 14

Thalochis, the indigenous Thai peasantry

Right: In a crowd watching a village fair

Left: Smiles, good health, and a rough shawl as cover against the cold wind

Some villages had been provided with "lady welfare workers." I was introduced to one of these—after cautious consultations around a corrugated-iron screen. Scuttling rustic belles vanished from view, then peeped round corners as she sallied forth to meet us, clad in a black burqa. Her job was to advise the women settlers about clean cooking, simple health rules, needlework, toys for the children. Although invisible to us behind her wrapping, her remarks indicated a woman of sense and education.

The three towns of Quaidabad, Liaquatabad and Jauharabad, perhaps as yet less than one-quarter built, were strictly planned too. The rows of semi-detached brick houses were of good design, rather too close, but the cost of municipal services would otherwise have been high. Ample space had been allotted for factories. Some were already put up: a carpet factory, a textile-mill. The 25,000 spindles for the latter were Japanese; British firms, it was said, could not promise delivery soon enough—a widespread complaint throughout Pakistan.

But my attention continued to wander guiltily in the Thal, straying from the utilitarian, concentrating for example on the indigenous Thal peasants, the Thalochis—wild things themselves like their sand-dunes and enchanting to look at, more so than the well-organized, rather unenterprisingly-clad settlers from East Punjab. The few original villages in the arid Thal had been so inaccessible that administrators seldom went near them; a self-sufficient, static culture had endured for centuries, based on a little grazing, and sparse cold-weather crops of gram or wheat sown in the hollows, dependent on chancy winter rainfall.

As we sped between the Thal Development Authority's new model townships, the military "chaks" and the experimental farms, we passed some of these rare hamlets: unregulated huddles of ancient mud houses around a stinking refuse-heap, the well nearby, shaded perhaps by a huge, heavily-foliaged fig tree.

Towards one such village a straggle of people was returning across the dunes from a neighbouring spring fair; tall, lean, clumsily-turbaned men, very handsome, in clothes of vivid greens and oranges, magentas and blacks. They had wrapped themselves in fringed stripy blankets, they wore gold earrings and perhaps necklets of rough jewellery, some went on foot, others were riding camels or horses or donkeys, perhaps three

or even four people astride a single animal. As they rode they clasped hookahs, puffing at them; they munched breadflaps, shouted and laughed to one another—and to us. There were women in white burqas; excited, shrill-voiced children. It was a happy time.

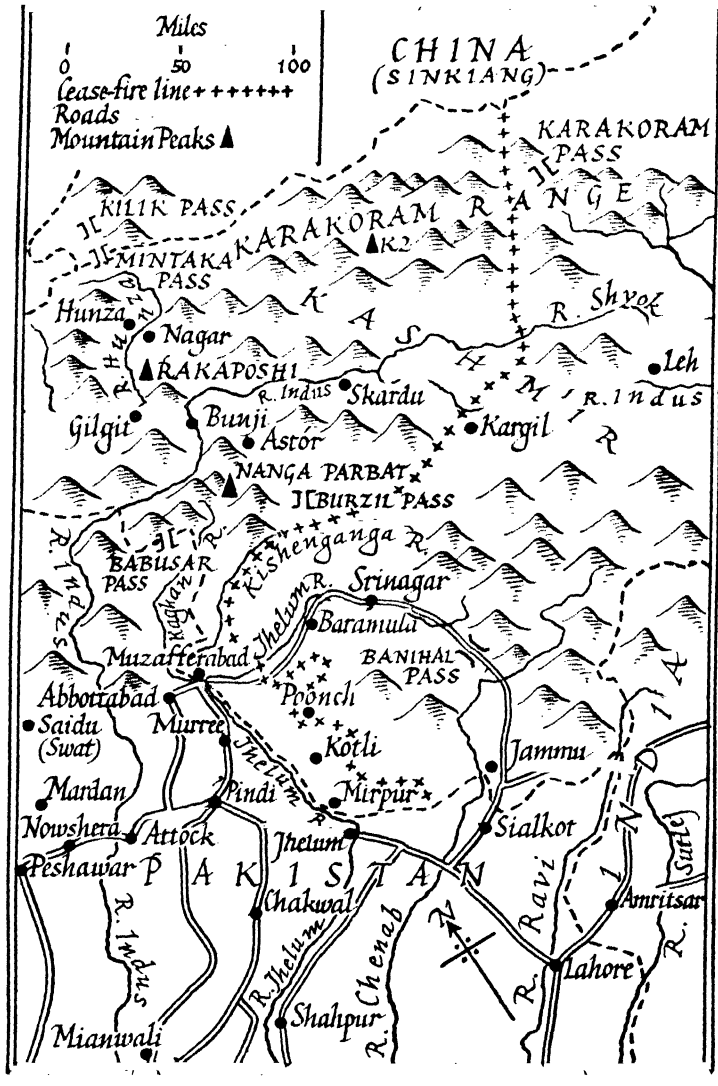
And then the dunes themselves. Agriculturally they were abominations. But at evening, when the sun slanted gold on their crests, and their depths filled with blue shadow, they attained a startling beauty, austere and clean. To windward they curved softly, femininely; to leeward they were knife-edged, abrupt, male; their valleys crinkled in tiny corrugations of sand. Almost halted in infinitely slow motion, they were like great ocean rollers, each with an individuality of its own, differing from every other; more worth gazing upon than any monotonous flat profitable wheatfield.

The utilitarian was set memorably at naught my last evening, as we drove in our station-wagon up the straight tarred road northward to Liaquatabad through an area of unmastered dunes. Two of them lay athwart the route, big ones, which had been cut to allow passage; but the gap was narrow. An obstruction loomed up in the gap, a bullock-cart, lurching northward also at its humble two miles an hour. We hooted, without effect, hooted loud and long again; were obliged to brake almost to a stop. A lonely old peasant in fluttering shirt and ragged turban knelt on the cart's flat top. He still paid us not the slightest attention, was not even driving; the bullock plodded on unguided. He faced not North but West, towards the setting sun, and was absorbed, altogether neglectful of our strident modernity, prostrating himself in prayer towards Mecca.

PART THREE

KASHMIRI

MAP 1


Miles
0
50
100
Cease-fire line
Roads
Mountain Peaks
CHINA
(SINKIANG)
KARAKORAM PASS
KILIK PASS
KARAKORAM RANGE
MINTAKA PASS
K2
Hunza
Nagar
RAKAPOSHI
R. Shyok
Leh
R. Indus
Skardu
Gilgit
Bunji
Astor
Kargil
R. Indus
NANGA PARBAT
BURZIL PASS
Kishenganga R.
BABUSAR PASS
Kishanganga R.
Jhelum R.
Srinagar
Baramula
Muzaffarabad
BANIHAL PASS
Poonch
Abbottabad
Murree
Saidu (Swat)
Kotli
Jammu
Mardan
Pindi
Mirpur
Nowshera
Attock
Jhelum
Sialkot
Peshawar
PAKISTAN
Chakwal
Ravi
Amritsar
Sutlej
R. Indus
R. Jhelum
R. Chenab
Lahore
Shahpur
Mianwali

Chapter 10

ORIGINS OF TRAGEDY

AS explained, Kashmir has in Indo-Pakistani affairs been the root of all evil, the reason why the great nation-making experiment of 1947 is not yet accountable as a success; and I had now reached a point in my journey when I was about to traverse much of that disputed principality's soil—on the Indian side of the cease-fire line, I hoped, as well as on the Pakistani side. Except for my two recent hours in Gilgit, it had all, for over four and a half years, been self-prohibited ground for me.

But to record what I saw and heard, without reference first to the dispute's origin, might not mean much. An attempt at this will therefore be made here, in a chapter digressing from the main narrative, a historical retrospect. Fortunately I had some opportunities in October 1947 to observe the tragedy's unfolding, having moved just before for this very purpose from Calcutta to Delhi, where the main decisions were made. I also had the luck to be acquainted with Lord Mountbatten, the central figure.

I had first met him during the war four years previously, in 1943, soon after he reached India as "Supremo" of the newly-created South East Asia Command. The encounter was to do with the birth of the "SEAC" newspaper for the troops in Assam and the Arakan, then bitterly called the "Forgotten Front." This is no place for details of that affair, though it is a good war-time story. Suffice it to say that, as a result of a brain-wave that came to me during a stormy talk with him, "The Statesman", instead of being "SEAC's" professional foe, as had seemed inevitable, found the means to become its friend and host. The two worked together under one roof, that of our Calcutta office, without a single serious quarrel for many very strenuous months of war, "SEAC" being edited by Frank Owen, later editor of the "Daily Mail."

Lord Mountbatten from the outset took keen personal interest in "SEAC", which he considered essential for the troops' morale. I too happened to be an anxious minor enthusiast on that subject,

partly because of distressing things learned from the aircrew guests in my flat. Indeed, it was this sentiment which had caused the brainwave. As a result, after that first interview, I was asked to meet the "Supremo" several times at his Headquarters, first in Delhi, later at Kandy in Ceylon. And having such openings to see his qualities at close range, I became a warm admirer. He on his part appreciated the decision which had enabled "SEAC" to get started quickly and efficiently.

Naturally therefore I had meetings with him again when he came back to India in 1947 as Viceroy. Some of his former interest in "SEAC" was now transferred to "The Statesman"; he asked many questions about its policy and possible future. My admiration continued—flawed only with some tiny cracks of half-felt misgiving.

He possessed, I thought, almost everything needed for his toweringly important post: outstanding gifts of leadership and personality coupled with all the social graces; good brains, good looks, a fine physique, and the prestige of Royal birth. These were immense advantages. Further, I much liked his lack of race-prejudice, a great asset—how great those blinded by this prejudice could not hope to see. Politically pink myself, I also liked his adventurous radicalism and flair for speed, which suited the prevailing Indian realities. In almost everything she had so far done in India during my 17 years there, Britain had lagged behind events; if, under his impetuous spurring, she now got some steps ahead of them, that at least would be a mistake in the right direction.

Some commentators, on his arrival as "Supremo" in 1943, echoing the gossip columnists of past years, and evidently thinking only of his birth and handsomeness, had termed him a "playboy." It was exasperating nonsense. I recall a party at that time, given on a lawn in King George's Avenue, New Delhi, to enable him to meet war correspondents and others. He made a brief and most engaging speech. I think nearly all of us were captivated, and supposed we had heard something of solid value. It was only afterwards, when dissecting his remarks, that we realized with what extreme skill—quite rightly in the circumstances—he had in fact told us practically nothing.

Very different, except for the great ability displayed, was his famous Press conference as Viceroy in 1947, when he expounded the Plan of June 3 for British relinquishment of power to about

300 critical questioners assembled in the old Princes' Chamber of the Legislature. For sheer intellectual range and vigour, for assured grasp of minutiae, yet brilliant marshalling of the main lines of a long, difficult argument, it was an extraordinary performance.

And now for those fateful days in the early autumn of that year—after Independence had been given, and the old British Raj was dead and had been partitioned, and the two new Dominions had been born; after the Viceroyalty had ceased, and this glittering personality had become the first Governor-General of one Dominion only—the days when the Kashmir affair began.

When I read in September that Mr Gopalaswamy Ayyengar, a very able and reputedly anti-Muslim Madrasi Brahmin who was the Prime Minister of Kashmir from 1937 to 1943, had been made Minister without Portfolio in the new Indian Cabinet, I said to our editorial conference in Calcutta: "That really does look as if India's up to something at Srinagar"; and our correspondents were told to watch for news.

There had been what seemed earlier pointers: for example, the successive visits to Kashmir, shortly before Partition, of Acharya Kirpalani, President of the Congress party, of some Ruling Princes from the East Punjab, and of Mahatma Gandhi. Now in one plane of his being Mahatma Gandhi was a saint, or at any rate an exceptionally good man. I interviewed him many times, and felt reverence as well as warm liking for him. But in another—this kind of seeming self-division, puzzling to some Westerners, can in Asia be perfectly natural and true—he was one of the world's most ingenious politicians; and it was hard to think what could have drawn him, as a saint, to Srinagar at that moment.

From early in July rumours had begun to reach us, of the sort since set forth in a book by Wilfred Russell,[1] that the Hindu Maharajah of Kashmir, although the overwhelming majority of his subjects were Muslims, was privately seeking pretexts for acceding to India. Of their accuracy it was impossible to judge. Contrary rumours that he was in a state of feeble indecision might be truer. Nevertheless those of the first sort were too many to be ignored.

[1] "Indian Summer", pp. 101-2, 105, 142

I had noted with interest, too, the announcements shortly before Partition of visits to Kabul, the Afghan capital, by the "Frontier Gandhi", Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and by a Hindu expert on Pathan affairs. For it was evident that if, on Pakistan's birth—the mere notion of which still outraged most Indian nationalists—co-ordinated movements opposed to her could be produced in Kashmir and Afghanistan, both of them predominantly Muslim territories and near to one another, the new State might be still-born, crushed by a sort of pincer-movement. At that time moreover Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's brother was still Chief Minister of the predominantly Muslim North-West Frontier Province.

In September also occurred a different sort of development. Authentic news began to trickle through of a large-scale insurrection by the tough Muslim peasants, many of them recently-demobilized soldiers, in the hilly South-Western corner of Kashmir State, around Poonch. They were in revolt against oppression by the Maharajah's officials—an oppression long known, which had at one time appeared to distress Congressmen much more than the British bureaucracy. The turmoil in the adjacent parts of the Punjab had doubtless spilt over into their territory and encouraged them to rise.

This important but remote insurrection, however, scarcely got into print. Most reports of it, in "The Statesman" as in other Calcutta papers, though in our case for one reason only, in theirs perhaps for two, went into the wastepaper-basket. Horrifying experience during the last 14 months had increasingly shown that to publish such matter might cause renewed bloodshed in the big cities. Unlike the enormous Punjab massacres, this event was in too distant and inaccessible an area for travellers to bring much news about it; a great deal else was going on; and Calcutta, after a year of almost ceaseless rioting, had just achieved something like peace. Though professionally wrong, it was from the higher humanitarian aspect perhaps right, in such extraordinary times, to prevent people from learning fresh things which might start them once more slaughtering one another in the streets.

About the middle of October, however, on top of the continuing reports of strife in Poonch, reports started coming of trouble further East in Kashmir State, around Jammu. The Muslims there, whose majority was less, were said to be in flight,

having been terrorized and in places cut up by Sikhs and Hindus, at the instigation of the Maharajah's officials. Affairs seemed moving to a climax. I guessed that news which could no longer be concealed would soon break—and moved to our Delhi office.

A day or two later, it was a Sunday morning, October 26, I went into G.H.Q. on some other matter. There I met General Bucher, recently in command at the Fort in Calcutta, who was now Chief of Staff to the Indian Army.[1] From him I learned that the Kashmir climax was upon us indeed—and for a startling new reason: Pathan tribesmen had burst in force into the Western part of the State. The message had just come; he said everyone was in a flap.

In G.H.Q., at any rate, the "flap" seemed real. I record that impression for what it may be worth. It does not necessarily mean that no plan had been made for getting Indian troops into Kashmir, nor, if one did, that General Bucher knew of it. British officers under the new Governments, in both countries, were perhaps not told everything. And listening a few days later to the troop-carrying Dakotas steadily droning over Delhi to Srinagar, I much wondered how so obviously first-rate a little airborne operation could have been improvised. I knew some of the difficulties, having as war correspondent in Europe in 1944 been laid on for various airborne "ops" which were planned but not put through.

But this anticipates. On the same evening, October 26, the evening when Delhi buzzed with comments on the Pathan incursion, I was asked to dinner with the Mountbattens, a small party. Preoccupied in Calcutta, I had not seen them for some weeks. As I recorded soon afterwards in a memorandum,[2] I was "startled by their one-sided verdicts on affairs." They seemed to have "become wholly pro-Hindu." The atmosphere at Government House that night was almost one of war. Pakistan, the Muslim League, and Mr Jinnah were the enemy. This tribal movement into Kashmir was criminal folly. And it must have been well organized. Mr Jinnah, Lord Mountbatten assured me, was waiting at Abbottabad, ready to drive in triumph to Srinagar

[1] Later C.-in-C.: Lt.-Gen. Sir Roy Bucher

[2] This was a general account, dated November 5, of my impressions during a fortnight's stay in the capital. It has been extensively drawn upon in compiling these pages

if it succeeded.[1] It was a thoroughly evil affair. By contrast, India's policy towards Kashmir, and the Princely States generally, had throughout been "impeccable."

After the meal Lord Mountbatten took me aside. As editor of an important paper I should know the facts fully. Because of the Pathan attack, the Maharajah's formal accession to India was at that moment being finalized. Subject to a plebiscite, this great State, its inhabitants mainly Muslim, would now be legally lost to Jinnah. The Pakistanis had been crazy to accept the accession of Junagadh.[2] Indian troops were to be flown into Kashmir at once; arrangements had been made. This was the only way to save Srinagar from sack by ruffianly tribesmen. It contained many Europeans, he pointed out. Outrages against helpless Europeans in the invaded regions were reported already.

What, he went on, could be more high-minded, in these circumstances, than Nehru's acceptance of Kashmir's accession subject to the special qualification of a plebiscite? Accession could have been very properly accepted without reserve of any kind. My memorandum records him as "persuasive, confident, charming, a successful commander on the eve of an important operation, who manifestly banked on hustling 'The Statesman' into complete support."

I was flabbergasted. The Junagadh affair, amidst so many other pressing events, I had perhaps wrongly looked upon almost as a triviality. Moreover there already seemed signs that India might forcibly reverse it—as she soon did. But Kashmir was very different, a State recognized to be of first-class importance, strategically and sentimentally. The whole concept of dividing the subcontinent into Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority areas, the basis of the June 3 Plan, seemed outraged. At a Hindu Maharajah's choice, but with a British Governor-General's backing, three million Muslims, in a region always considered to be vital to Pakistan if she were created, were legally to be made Indian citizens.

I said little, except for expressing doubts whether a plebiscite

[1] Subsequent enquiries indicate that Lord Mountbatten was misinformed, and that Mr Jinnah spent all the latter part of October in Karachi or Lahore

[2] The small principality in Kathiawar which, a few days earlier, through the act of its Muslim Ruler, had acceded to Pakistan. It was a Hindu-majority area. See Chapter 5, pp. 60, 61

would prove readily feasible; went back much concerned, feeling that nothing but big trouble could come of this thing; and next day managed to get an interview with the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel. I much liked the tough old Sardar, even when in disagreement with his views; he had always been very cordial and frank. Five minutes with him was in my experience worth fifteen with Pandit Nehru. My memorandum however records that "undercurrents in his remarks seemed only to confirm my surmise that India's policies towards the Princely States had not been wholly 'impeccable', in aim or method."

Here then, far too soon after Independence to be healthy, for "The Statesman" or me, was a major issue on which it seemed that the new India had decided wrongly, and deserved criticism. Should I criticize, and if so how? On so big a topic we must express some opinion. But for a British-owned paper to disagree with the old British Raj was one thing; for it to do so with the new Indian Government, still so sensitive and raw, was another. Clashes with Authority are indeed at times an essential part of an editor's job. During my term of office we had for instance disagreed sharply with Lord Linlithgow, in the autumn of 1942, over the then important matter of Mr Rajagopalachari's request to see Mahatma Gandhi in jail, and with Lord Wavell, and indeed the whole Cabinet Mission in June 1946, over the controversy about Clause 8 in the Mission's Plan. But they were British, we were British, and we felt strong enough to do this; how strong were we now?

Anxiously I totted up the plus and minus items. The Pathan incursion was plainly in itself an outrage; and plainly, too, many of the tribesmen, in their rush towards Srinagar, had behaved shamefully, killing, burning, looting. That was the first item, a big one. And if, as India claimed, the Pakistani Government had arranged it, that was outrageous too. But owing to the way Partition happened, that Government was still so obviously unorganized that a query should in fairness be put against the secondary point.

Again, Pakistan's acceptance of accession by the Nawab of Junagadh had been absurd, the first such affront to the general principles of the June 3 Plan. But India already had Junagadh under economic and military blockade. If, as seemed likely, she

occupied it, her cause for grievance there collapsed—and with it also much of her legal claim to be in Kashmir.

Finally, there was the doctrine of secularism or non-communalism, in effect of basic national identity between Hindus and Muslims, already being pressed as justification for India entering Kashmir, a Muslim-majority area. If it worked it was an admirable doctrine, and Sheikh Abdullah, who had been chosen to head the Administration in Indian-held Kashmir, seemed from his reputation a good instrument for it. But it had notoriously failed to work, and had therefore been set aside under the June 3 Plan, throughout the Provinces of British India. Would it really work in Kashmir? Why should such an exception be tried?

These three items, all of some validity, but in parts questionable, seemed the total which could be put on the plus side. There were many to go on the minus. Though a brutal, bloody affair, the Pathan raid was not the only such in Kashmir; it should not be pushed out of perspective. For weeks, as the well-informed knew, there had been bloodshed in Poonch; prolonged tyranny and recent outrages by the Maharajah's State Forces and police had evidently caused a genuine peasant revolt, of the sort with which Indian Congressmen might have been expected to sympathize.

Casualties among the innocent on both sides might be much bigger than in the Pathan raid; no one yet knew, owing to the bad communications. And now horrible rumours were arriving, too many to be baseless, of organized eviction and slaughter of Muslims around Jammu, with the Maharajah's alleged approval, an affair which perhaps had been in motion before the Pathan raid was launched.

Then there were the various earlier pointers to possibilities of intrigue: that appointment in September to the Indian Cabinet, those visits to Srinagar and Kabul, the many curious rumours about the Maharajah's intentions. His overthrow in August of Prime Minister Kak had been very odd. Not all these items, surely, could be dismissed as meaning nothing?

Nor, perhaps, could items in Lord Mountbatten's own conduct which, looking back, I now thought disquieting. His weak point, some said, was vanity. At his talk to journalists in July, when Mr Jinnah's decision to become Pakistan's first Governor-General was disclosed, his pride had seemed hurt, though we thought needlessly: for how could anyone, however able,

function effectively as Governor-General of both the new Dominions? Perhaps however his dislike of Mr Jinnah, now so clear, dated from then? The implications were unpleasant.

But I guessed too at something deeper. Himself a hustler, "dynamic"—it was a word often on his lips and Pandit Nehru's—had he let himself be hustled into an over-simplified interpretation of Indo-Pakistani facts? Had his Leftist leanings misled him? The Congress party had friendly associations with British Leftists, with Labour. Perhaps to eyes such as his—necessarily top-level eyes, because in his job he had little time left for any but the top men—the Congress with its sophisticated charming leaders was the progressive, dynamic party, and therefore congenial; the Muslim League by contrast reactionary.

He might not have noticed, though so very intelligent—he was new to the subcontinent's complex politics—that in recent years the League, beneath the surface of a still conservatively inclined leadership, had developed a dynamism comparable to that of the Congress—indeed perhaps stronger and more explosive, because newer. To some extent its leadership was being unwillingly impelled by forces from below; the party had changed surprisingly fast from a debating society of a few elderly title-holders into a mass movement. In that respect at least, the disparaging verdicts on it doubtless dinned into him by Congressmen were about five years out of date.

Discussing "The Statesman's" position with me during the first week of July, he had asked what our intentions were in Pakistan. "I hear you're opening an office in Karachi; is that so?"

"Unfortunately no", I told him. "We're fully stretched with our building extensions in Delhi. They were decided on long before Partition."

He expressed relief, then added: "You said 'unfortunately.' Why?"

I was puzzled. "Being British-owned, we'll presumably have to try to maintain an inter-Dominion policy, in fairness. That might be easier if we published in both countries."

He said he thought we would find things much simpler as they were. We could drop our Pakistani or Muslim circulation and "concern ourselves primarily with India's affairs."

A whole-hearted admirer, I did not at the time think of bias in this. I supposed it due to misunderstanding of our particular

circulation problems, too detailed then to go into; and I set the matter aside. Reflecting upon it anew, it perturbed me.

No, no; the minus items were altogether too many. It was impossible to tot up an account in this Kashmir crisis on which "The Statesman" could give India full support. We still stood for something; we had traditions of integrity and detachment to uphold; of necessity we were a non-communal, non-party, Commonwealth organ. Accordingly, from uneasy cogitations an editorial resulted, "Dangerous Moves"; it came out on the morning of October 28.[1] Glancing at it since, I have found little that I would alter.

Within a few hours the Governor-General's Press Attaché, Mr Campbell-Johnson, telephoned; would I please come to see His Excellency? During the ensuing interview "The Statesman" was in effect threatened with death, on the Indian Cabinet's behalf, unless it adopted a more pro-Indian line. Mr Campbell-Johnson was present. Expressing the gravest displeasure, Lord Mountbatten declared that "by this article", I quote from my memorandum, "we had done serious public disservice. After all the trouble which he (Lord Mountbatten) and Mr Patel had taken to explain matters, they had found themselves that morning 'hit for six—yes, Sir.' Amazement had been voiced in Cabinet, by Mr Patel and others. It had been impossible for him to defend me. He had felt much embarrassed and annoyed, having previously tried hard to build up in his colleagues' minds the notion that a British-owned newspaper in the new India was needed. Did I suppose that Mr Patel, after being hit for six in such a fashion, would ever now do anything for us? And so on."

When the storm had lessened somewhat he disclosed important news. There was to be an inter-Dominion conference about Kashmir at Lahore next day. Shaken by the views expressed, for I well knew our vulnerability, I said that this gave scope for a further editorial, as a stopgap while I was thinking the main issue over. "As events turned out, however", my memorandum adds, " the conference was first postponed, and then proved a tragic fiasco, owing to Pandit Nehru's 'indisposition', and to Sardar Patel's 'inability to leave Delhi'—though he soon afterwards managed relatively long trips to Srinagar and Junagadh."

On October 30 I asked Mr Campbell-Johnson to mention to

[1] See Appendix III

Lord Mountbatten that I had considered the affair further. I could not see my way to change the views I had formed about Kashmir; and so long as I was editor it would be my duty—and I thought in the interests of the Commonwealth as well—to try to uphold an inter-Dominion policy, rather than to support one side.

That was how matters remained professionally until, in the circumstances told at the beginning of this book, I left the paper three and half years later. And from those fateful days in October 1947 until early in 1949 the best of the new Independent India's Army fought Pakistani-backed irregulars most bitterly in the beautiful Kashmiri hills. For Englishmen who loved both countries and who attached value to the term Commonwealth, it was an anguishing campaign to read about, amounting in effect to an undeclared inter-Commonwealth war, waged in large part by recent comrades-in-arms, members of the former splendid Army of undivided India. The cease-fire which was achieved after delicate negotiations in January 1949 did indeed raise hopes of a major and early political settlement. These however were not fulfilled. For over five years from its outset this intractable quarrel altogether bedevilled relations between the successor-States of the British Raj.[1]

[1] I had supposed that my talks with Lord Mountbatten were confidential, and have hitherto treated them as such. Mr Campbell-Johnson, however, in his book "Mission with Mountbatten" published in 1951, has described in some detail (p. 225) my interview with his chief on October 28, 1947

Chapter 11

INTO AZAD KASHMIR

IT was March 22, 1952, and I was once more setting forth by car from my 'Pindi home—this time to Mirpur in Azad Kashmir.

Imagine a short, thickset, energetic-looking man; bald, with a fine domed brow, widely-spaced eyes, compact features, and an expression of attentive thought; on his chin, a short trim beard. The description might be of Lenin, as known from his busts and portraits. It would apply also to Colonel Ataullah, of the Pakistan Army Medical Service, with whom most of my travels in Azad Kashmir were done.

He was on an official tour. He had spent much time there when the war was on, organizing hospitals and ambulances for sick civilians and wounded volunteers. "The war", in these areas, means not World War II, but the most recent and closest war in public memory, the 14-months' conflict against the Indian Forces in 1947-49.

"Azad Kashmir" also needs explaining—as does "Indian-held Kashmir" and "Pakistani-held Kashmir." Almost every geographical term about the disputed principality is contentious, liable to cause offence. India, for example, abhors "Indian-held Kashmir"; in her view it obliquely suggests a permanent partitioning, and therefore begs the essential question. All Kashmir, she contends, is legally hers, because of the Maharajah's accession; the Pakistanis have no right in it anywhere, they are aggressors. Though no ready alternative exists, "The Statesman" did not dare to print the term Indian-held Kashmir during the latter part of my time; periphrasis had to be devised.

Pakistan, however, equally considers all Kashmir justly hers. For reasons identical with India's, but reversed, she abhors "Pakistani-held Kashmir." As with India, Kashmir is Kashmir, but especially the parts in which she happens at present to be. What the Indians in her view wrongfully and temporarily hold, her Press dubs "Bharati-occupied Kashmir."

Even more heinous in Indian eyes than "Indian-held Kashmir"

is "Azad Kashmir", as description of territory occupied by Pakistan. For "Azad" means free—free, that is, from rightful Indian control. The term, Indians believe, was coined by Pakistanis only to annoy, to confuse, to beg the question. Except within careful quotation marks at every usage, it is (or in my time was) unprintable in the Indian Press.

A subsidiary intricacy however needs unravelling. To Pakistanis, Azad Kashmir does not normally mean what Pakistani-held Kashmir does to Indians; it means only about half of it, the fringe of Poonchi territory along the principality's Southern and Western border. This area is under civil administration by the Azad Kashmir or A.K. Government at Muzafferabad, the rival body to Sheikh Abdullah's Indian-supported Government in Srinagar. Contrariwise all the Northern, sparsely populated but large part of Pakistani-held Kashmir around Gilgit is administered not from Muzafferabad but direct by the Pakistani Central Government from 'Pindi or Karachi. Thus that area is not, in normal Pakistani parlance, Azad Kashmir at all. It is the Gilgit Agency or Northern Territory.

In this book efforts at periphrasis would only bewilder. Indian-held Kashmir, Pakistani-held Kashmir, and the subsidiary Azad Kashmir are clear terms, representing what were distinct but simple military or political actualities at the time of my travels. No concise alternatives for any of them so far as I know exist; no offence is meant by their use.

On March 22, therefore, in the company of a red-tabbed Pakistani Army doctor looking rather like Lenin, I set off for Azad Kashmir.

From 'Pindi we motored to Jhelum, the riverside city which I had flown over in the Freighter on March 11; then up the bank of a big irrigation canal, reaching the border near Alibeg. Habituated by a lifetime of multiplying frontiers and restrictions to delays on such occasions, vividly aware moreover, from experience in 1951, of the appalling complexities of crossing the Indo-Pakistani frontier at Wagah, I expected stoppage at a check-post. There was none. Traffic between Pakistan and Azad Kashmir flows freely.

Alibeg to Indian ears is a name of ill repute. During the winter of 1947-48 Hindu and Sikh fugitives from the Poonchi insurrec-

tion further North were kept by the Muslims in captivity here. Evil tales were told of it, I do not know with what truth.

At Mangla, the canal headworks, we stopped at a tented Army camp for tea—the first of the improvised military establishments which I was to live among for days. It was a pretty place; a crag dominating it was crowned by a romantic small fort, said to have been set up by the Emperor Akbar.

Leaving it, we entered the Himalayan foothills. Doubtless they were refreshing when first glimpsed in the spring by Moghul eyes wearied with flat horizons and months of exacting governmental affairs. Nevertheless these hills are of the inferior, monotonous, pine-clad sort characteristic of Azad Kashmir. India had the best of the cease-fire bargain, scenically as well as strategically. The famous beauty-spots, the great deodar forests, the lakes, the poplar avenues, the pretty and accessible snow-ranges nearly all lie in Indian-held territory. Tourists in the latter years of the British Raj seldom bothered to visit the Poonchi area, now Azad Kashmir. Nor were there good roads by which they could do so; the Maharajah had always neglected it. Consequently they motored straight through to Srinagar by the excellent main route via Murree or Abbottabad, unaware except from hearsay of the local administrative shortcomings which contributed to the eventual revolt.

We crested the last pine-draped ridge before Mirpur in twilight. In a shallow valley of unexpected breadth and grace lay what remained of this once prosperous little town, surrounded by young wheatfields. We were to spend the night there. Ataullah had to inspect the hospital next morning. We passed this establishment en route to the rest-house; I noticed the big red crosses daubed on its roof and sides—protection against air raids.

Mirpur itself I thought horrible. It is said to be the most devastated town anywhere in Kashmir. Certainly the damage is much worse than at Baramula, on the Indian side. Practically the whole centre of the place no longer exists, obliterated by successive waves of riot, arson, bombing. Which of these was worst a stranger could not judge; the local people specified the last.

Early in the Poonchi uprising the insurgent forces had attacked, capturing the Treasury, killing many Hindus and Sikhs, looting or burning their houses. Then, soon after the Maharajah's acces-

PLATE 15

In Azad Kashmir

Above: Mirpur, a town battered successively by riots, arson, and Indian air-raids

Left: A Brigadier of the Pakistani Army

PLATE 16. Wayfarers' devotions in remote places: Muslims by the roadside at prayer

sion to India, came the retaliatory Indian air raids, meant doubtless mainly to break up the rebels' precarious supply-route northward to the front line. Though not heavy, for suitable planes were lacking, they were frequent.

Until 1947 the town's population was about 15,000; now it was less than 3,000—and most of the petty shopkeepers who hawked wares by day amidst the rubble of the bazaars vanished to the villages at nightfall. There had been almost no private rebuilding. This is generally as true of Indian-held as Pakistani-held Kashmir, anyway within 30 miles or so of the cease-fire line. Enterprise lies paralysed. So long as political uncertainty clouds the country's future and trade between the two parts remains totally blocked, few will venture cash on fresh undertakings.

An after-dinner walk through the town proved eerie. Filthy puddles filled the rutted road; there was scarcely anyone to be seen, or even a light; shattered masonry lay chaotically around; sometimes half a broken house outlined itself against the sky, or an abandoned Hindu temple. Materially the atmosphere stank with many putrescences; spiritually—but perhaps this was imagination—I thought it vibrated with recently experienced suffering and cruelty.

Next afternoon we left for Kotli, travelling parallel with the river Poonch, a brown, foam-streaked torrent in a wide bed.

At a wayside village a political meeting was going on, supervised by "National Guards"; smart, self-confident youths in bright green berets topped by flashy scarlet cockades.

After a while the country contracted, bore a heavier burden of forest. We were now on a newly-made road. It was very well engineered, along the flanks of steep, sinuous V-shaped valleys. The most difficult part, a climb out of a gorge, had I was told been reckoned impracticable until study of goat-movements up the hill suggested a way. The original Mirpur-Kotli road had stretched uselessly off to our right, some distance back. Six miles of it lay captive within Indian-held territory.

Road-making, on both sides of the cease-fire line, has been one of the few incidental benefits which harassed rural Kashmiris have got from the prolonged Indo-Pakistani dispute about their territory. Large areas, formerly inaccessible, have been opened up by modern communications.

Ataullah's Ford saloon had been spluttering on the slopes. Stopping now to tinker with it, the driver, an impetuous type, contrived to smash the distributor—and looked laughably crest-fallen. It was late afternoon, the place was lonely, we wondered if we would be benighted there. Rahim shook the driver's morale further by asserting that a panther would eat him; it was indeed ideal panther country.

Then an open Kotli-bound Army truck packed with troops appeared. There was not room for four of us in it, only two; so we callously left Rahim as well as the driver to be gobbled by panthers, and climbed aboard, Ataullah as befitted his red tabs with the lieutenant in front, and myself, to my pleasure, with the troops.

"You old man, I child", said a very young sepoy, proud of his English, hospitably insisting that I use his bedding-roll as seat. But in so crammed a vehicle this was scarcely feasible, and soon we were all upright, amicably swaying in unison to the truck's movements as it rounded the incessant bends, clutching the metal stanchions for support, brown hands with browner knuckles pressed against mine. The air was fresh, pine-scented. Sometimes swirls of flying ants laced it; the sunset lit their veined glassy wings, their soft bodies smote the face.

At a wayside halt the troops bought oranges. My neighbour peeled one for me, broke it into segments. They were friendly lads, many of them exiled from homes in India. Darkness came; tiny golden lights began appearing on the velvety hills, and we reached Kotli in good time, Rahim arriving uneaten with the luggage on another vehicle soon after.

Kotli was a brigade headquarters. Coming here from the established military centre of 'Pindi, with its lavish facilities, was rather like a visit from Delhi to one of the forward-area units in Eastern Bengal or Assam in 1944. Conditions were improvised, primitive, almost "front-line"—except for the presence in the Mess of two U.N. observers—a New Zealander and an American.

Conditions next day became more "front-line" still. Ataullah stayed behind at Kotli to inspect its hospital; I was taken by jeep through Khuireta, to get a glimpse near Tain of "no-man's-land", and the opposing Indian and Pakistani posts in their state of frozen war, armistice-halted.

My companion, Captain Sikander, was a refugee from Jammu in Indian-held Kashmir—the part of the principality where in the autumn of 1947, after the first terrorizings, almost the whole Muslim population, amounting to several hundred thousand, had fled or been slaughtered. He was himself then a political prisoner at Srinagar, jailed by Sheikh Abdullah's Government. On being eventually freed, he learned that many of his family, including his daughter, had vanished. They had never been traced.

We drove East along a wide valley of dramatic geological structure. Black rocks pierced its floor in ruinous vertical strata parallel with our route, sometimes forming pinnacles hundreds of feet high. It was as if, in a past epoch, an immense dragon had died here, leaving nothing of its corpse but these gigantic earth-embedded vertebrae.

Military paraphernalia increased. There were Army truck-parks, wired-in enclosures, crisply-phrased signboards in English and Urdu. Peasants' log-roofed mud-walled homes had become billets, offices, stores, messes. New corrugated-iron huts had sprung up.

Wrecked villages, lonely war-shattered houses could be seen. This country had been much fought over in the late autumn of 1948, shortly before the armistice. The little wooden shops of Khuireta bazaar, a tidy row, seemed entirely new; the place had been rebuilt under Army auspices, for it was the main market for the surrounding villages.

At the time of the cease-fire, Sikander told me, about 25,000 refugees from the Indian-held territory further East had been pent in this valley, besides such of the original inhabitants as had stayed. They were in great distress. No road to Mirpur and the plains was available. Until the new one which we had traversed yesterday was built, they had been supplied by air-drop.

Though signs of battle were so evident, the farmed area as we approached the cease-fire line did not lessen. Now was the season when the contrast between non-cultivated and cultivated showed most. Grasslands or forest slopes remained a wintry brown, but the young wheat was vivid green. The cultivators were busy in the fields, women and children helping the men; there were oxen and cows, buffaloes, goats, poultry, dogs—an apparently peaceful rural scene.

Sikander removed his shoulder-badges as we went through the barrier—official routine apparently. Soon after, a Pakistani sentry halted us; we had been checked already, but fresh check by his platoon commander was required. The man spoke in a dramatic half-whisper, which seemed absurd. Asked why, he asserted that Indian sentries not far off might hear.

There was some delay. We sat in the sun by a deserted cow-stall, now the men's sleeping-quarters. Sikander read from a book belonging to one of the troops: an Arabic-charactered manuscript poem, full of martial Muslim sentiments in the Punjabi dialect.

Then we were let proceed towards the final stop-point. Here the landscape opened. Heavy silence lay on the air, broken by the occasional cry of a kite. Facing one another across the emptiness of no-man's-land, about 50 yards apart, were two sentry-boxes, a Pakistani soldier in one, a trim little Gurkha in another.

Delighted, for I had seen no Gurkha for months, and he looked rather like my Ran Bahadur, I saluted. He stared, craned his neck, did no more—understandably suspicious, for I had forgotten my appearance, which had become much Pakistani-fied. A conspicuous white Chitrali cap topped my head, better suited to Asian sun and wind than European headdress; outside my khaki shorts a grey mazri[1] shirt flapped loose, Muslim-fashion; below were Pathan chaplis.[2] Sikander surmised that news of this unsolicited gesture to a Gurkha sepoy by a mysterious Chitrali, reported back to Srinagar and re-transmitted to Delhi, would in due course be puzzled over by Indian Intelligence.

The Indian-held and the Pakistani-held territory differed greatly in appearance. Whereas on the Pakistani side, a patchwork of green oblongs and triangles covered the valley up to the verge of no-man's-land, the Indian side was all brown. Shrivelled weeds and dry wintry grasses sparsely draped the untended fields. They had been well terraced for cultivation, stepped up one above the other by little containing walls and parapets of earth. The eye traced the outline. But no cultivation was now discernible—nor any cultivator. The landscape lay desolate.

While we had been passing through Khuireta, en route to

[1] Mazri is a Pathan dye

[2] Heavy sandal-like shoes. See p. 52

inspect no-man's-land here, the colonel in command had offered, when Sikander and I had finished, to take me up the range of forested hills which now blocked the southern sky, to see the last Pakistani outposts on the top. It rose abruptly from the valley-floor by about 2,000 ft., and, like the valley, had been heavily fought over.

This colonel, a fine young Pathan, little more than 30, now arrived in another jeep, and proceeded to alarm me very much. I had not realized what the nature of the road would be, or that any motor vehicle could make such an ascent. It was like climbing the roof of a house. Some of the gradients were one in three. So sharp were many of the corners that they were not negotiable at a single turn; after a first effort the jeep had to be backed for a second one—to the unwalled edge of a precipice. From daily use of this hair-raising jeep-track he could judge his distances to within a fraction of an inch. But though assured of this, there were moments when I would rather have been doing aerobatics in a Meteor or Fury, and could scarcely restrain myself from leaping to safety.

At the summit we sat pleasantly under the pines, drinking strong thick tea in metal mugs supplied by the troops. The colonel however had not finished his surprises; he now launched into a learned political disquisition, backed by citations from Scottish, Spanish, and Turkish history.

On an adjacent crest stood the Indian outpost, an embrasure of stone. Gazing down past it into the valley, I was struck afresh by the untended look of the Indian-held land. Not a sign of crops appeared except about nine miles off, close to the limit of vision. According to the Pakistanis, the Indian authorities distrusted Muslim cultivators near their side of the line, and gave them no encouragement to return.

Ataullah and I left Kotli for Hajira on March 25. Travelling with him yielded much curious reminiscence of "the war." It had an epic guerilla flavour, the enthusiasm of struggle against nearly overwhelming odds.

He pointed out a group of low mud-and-timber huts on the far side of the valley. It had been his first hospital. Gifts of fowls and eggs and milk from the local people for his patients had almost overwhelmed them. Movement along the road in those

days had been by night only; teams of singing muleteers had jogged to and fro beneath the starry pines. By day, because of Indian aircraft, roads and villages emptied; nearly everyone took to the hills and forests.

Most of the bridges on our route that day were new. Broken masonry of the old ones lay scattered below; they had been war-casualties.

We reached Hajira and lunched in the Mess. A European officer arrived, wearing a uniform that I could not identify; a Swedish U.N. observer, I was told.

He pecked at his food. "You look rather queasy", someone remarked.

"I'm just back from investigating that cease-fire line incident. It wasn't pleasant. I'll be putting in my preliminary report after lunch."

Firing, I learned, had been heard the previous evening. On approach, two corpses in no-man's-land were seen. One was shot through the thigh, both had been bayoneted in the belly. They were said to be peasants, father and son, from the Pakistani side, the old man reputedly aged 80. Perhaps they had been trespassing to cut grass or to round up cattle, or were merely wandering in ignorance. Novel frontiers are not easy for the poor to remember.

Murmurs rippled among the Pakistani officers. "But what can we do?" they indignantly asked. "If we take reprisals against civilians from their side, we shall only be killing fellow-Muslims."

The Swedish colonel proved an enthusiast for things Oriental. He liked Indians and Pakistanis, their cultures, their food, their clothes; their emotional warmth, their variety, their enthusiasm. He had taken to hookah-smoking, and described himself as "fed up with the West, so monotonous; equality and mechanization are a bore." When I said he must find it sad working for the U.N., trying to stop people he so much liked from fighting one another, he unexpectedly replied: "What they really need, the dear things, is another Moghul emperor."

After lunch there was a football match; and not till then did I realize that most of the troops I had lived among for the last few days were locally recruited Azad Kashmir levies, not of the regular Pakistani Army at all. So good was their turn-out, discipline and physique that no difference had been visible.

"Come on now, Mushtaq!" The shouts to the players were partly in English. But the reactions at victory had an Asian exuberance. Spectators hugged one another, crackers or squibs went off; shoes were flicked in the air, acrobatic cartwheels done over the field.

Similarly with the smart regimental band. It played familiar Western airs on the bagpipes, such as "A Hundred Pipers", or "The British Grenadiers". But they were half-transformed by exciting Asian trills unknown in the original score.

We slept that night at Trarkhel, about 2,000 ft. higher, in heavy conifer forest. The snowy Pir Panjal range between us and Srinagar could be seen, Indian-held.

Ataullah had to inspect another hospital, a picturesque log-cabined affair. Next day, his official business done, he would return to 'Pindi; we might meet later at Muzafferabad. I was to stay with the District Magistrate at Palandri, a place about 20 miles ahead, made famous during the Poonchi rising. I decided to walk; it should be a pleasant day's trip through the hills.

Moments come in Delkarian travel when one wants to be alone, to avoid the human voice, to sort out impressions. But this is strangely difficult. As usual I was foiled. To my consternation I discovered on starting that besides Rahim—so much part of me that when necessary he is equivalent to solitude—I was to have with me four companions: a couple of guides plus two minor local officials, all deputed by the hospitable Palandri D.M.

We had an enjoyable but increasingly chattersome and numerous expedition—swelling eventually to over 30 persons—through the heart of the barren country which breeds the hardiest Poonchi peasants, the Sudhans. These people had been the first to rise against the Maharajah; had probably suffered the most; and now regarded themselves as the heroes of "the war", proving (I understood) rather difficult about it.

Starting from about 7,000 ft., we climbed 1,500, descended 3,000, climbed 2,000. As we began the second ascent, sweating and puffing, two men were descried awaiting us—emissaries, it turned out, of the local tehsildar.[1] Rounding a rock, we found the tehsildar himself and six other persons assembled on level ground; bearded, sombre-faced Sudhans. News of our journey had

[1] Village official

been sent from the D.M.'s office, they said. They were honoured to receive me; visitors to the Sudhnuti country were rare; it was months, perhaps years, since a British writer had come.

We shook hands, exchanged compliments. The ceremonial moment spun itself delicately out, with Asian grace, there in the lonely pinewoods. Garlands of sweet-scented fruit blossom were placed round my neck and Rahim's. Then we resumed our panting clamber up the stony path—a troupe now of fifteen politely conversing people.

Roofs of a mud-and-timber village came into view, and, silhouetted on the skyline, gazing down on us, apparently the entire local male population. Yes, it was only too true; a formal reception impended. Sweat streaming from us, we crested the last rise. Three youths flung cracker-balls of welcome over a precipice, where in falling they detonated loudly. Simultaneously I found myself within a small stone-walled square. One flank was lined solid with about forty schoolchildren at the salute—which they embarrassingly upheld after I had returned it, so that I was at a loss how to thaw them.

Opposite stood men of military bearing in remnants of uniform. Beyond were tables with bright, embroidered cloths spread for food, and two rows of chairs, one outdoors, the other and grander—subtle social point—just within a shaded verandah. The village was festive, agog with interest. Women peeped discreetly at us through doorways.

Tea was brought, in handled cups of glass; hard-boiled eggs, already shelled by village fingers; slices of English-type cake, specially brought from afar; oranges, nuts. A lad fanned my moist face with a flapping cloth. One of the retired military men, wearing a henna-dyed beard and an American officer's brass-buttoned coat, explained that he was a veteran of World War I, when he had fought in France. Among the younger ones, two had fought in Burma; a third served with the Allied Occupation Forces in Japan. Soldiering had long been the chief occupation for the men of the barren Sudhnuti. The experience thus got was doubtless helpful in "the war." The Maharajah's State Forces possessed less of it.

Along much of the remaining narrow stony track to Palandri, seven miles or so, a crowd of friendly villagers straggled with us, still excited by a foreigner's arrival.

Heavy rain fell overnight. Palandri is a little place, which had been so badly bombed that the Government had practically rebuilt it. The bazaar, of pine-log shacks, was all new. So—except for the charred outer rubble walls—was the D.M.'s bungalow, which had been gutted.

The D.M., hospitable man, had much to say, political and personal, augmented by a police officer from Muzafferabad who was also staying at Palandri. Next morning, under moist skies, I set off with my host for the plains down a steep, parapetless hill-road. He had official business to do in 'Pindi. Several times our jeep slithered horribly towards the edge in chocolate-coloured mud. Azad Kashmiris, gifted with many new roads, seem hardened to such modern hazards; for me it was nearly as frightening as the drive at Tain.

Chapter 12

MAHSUD DIGRESSION

WHETHER I would be allowed to cross the cease-fire line to Srinagar, capital of Indian-held Kashmir, still oscillated uncertainly. I addressed myself again to this matter in 'Pindi.

The Pakistanis said they could get me to the edge of no-man's-land through Chakoti, on the main 'Pindi-Srinagar road. On the Indian side both Dr Mehta in Karachi, and Mr Banerji in Lahore whom I had later consulted, were doing what they could; fresh correspondence from their offices awaited me. But Delhi's decision, and that of Sheikh Abdullah's Government in Srinagar, remained problematical.

The actual crossing in any case could only be done under U.N. escort. As advised, I had applied early to the U.N. authorities in 'Pindi. There seemed signs that, if Delhi agreed, they would.

My request however had been much more unusual than I had realized when first making it in Karachi; the awkward fact had emerged that only two civilian non-officials had been let over the line since the armistice in January 1949. The recognized method was to travel deviously round via Lahore and Amritsar, about 400 miles, as compared with less than 200. Even that required two sets of frontier formalities and a special local permit.

This geographically simple undertaking, in fact, had got enmeshed in a triangular bureaucratic web of wonderful complexity. What a contrast to conditions as established by the old British Raj, before Delkaria got freedom! Until 1947, if you wanted to reach Srinagar direct from 'Pindi, less than a day's journey, you simply boarded a bus or car—and went. It was the main tourist route.

At least, however, while waiting hopefully for the web to be unravelled, I could visit Muzafferabad, the improvised capital of Azad Kashmir, staffed largely by exiles, longing to return to their old homes among the lakes and poplars in the Kashmir Vale. And now seemed the best moment, before my second visit to Gilgit—and the exciting regions beyond.

About that part of the plan, to the remoter part of the Northern

Territory, I was in luck, even should I be debarred from Indian-held Kashmir. An official permit had come, enabling me to enter the Hunza-Nagar area of the Karakoram. For years I had wanted to. It had been physically rather difficult always, and for political reasons few people nowadays achieved it. During April it should be wonderful.

So with that happily settled, and Rahim beside me, on a sparkling morning late in March 1952 I journeyed forth again from my 'Pindi home, that is to say Major-General and Begum Shahid Hamid's, this time for a short interim stay in Muzafferabad.

Gulmar Khan, the young Mahsud, was not with us. For various reasons, among them shortage of car-space and Rahim's black looks. He had returned for a while to my friend Hashem. There had not been room for him when we went to Mirpur; it was bad for him to sit idling about at 'Pindi. His absence from this part of the trip was however a pity, for his recollections of Muzafferabad in 1947-48, when he went through to snipe the Indian Army, a 13-year-old aggressor, might have been worth having.

Looking back through the earlier part of this book, where the Mahsuds are described, I see that I have only touched on, not explained, my liking for them.

They possess a very bad name—and rightly, for they have appalling deeds to their discredit, and at times are simply savages. But it is hard not to feel enthusiasm for a people who, when one is in trouble—and under circumstances which imprint themselves on the memory—have unexpectedly befriended one.

That was my experience at a first meeting in June 1948, and the tale seems worth telling.

At that time I was footslogging with Rahim out of Chitral State—a mountainous principality westward of but adjacent to Kashmir—and incidentally far from Mahsud country, which is in Waziristan.

The trouble was twofold: political and abdominal. I was under notice of expulsion from Chitral; and I had dysentery. Annoyance and indeed amazement at the one—for it was an unusual experience for an editor of "The Statesman", and I thought I had entered the State under correct auspices—had spurred me into a journey for which the other in fact unfitted me.

To the first rest-house in Dir State from Ziarat, the halt as

one goes southward out of Chitral, meant a 3,000-ft. climb, transit of an 11,000-ft. snow-pass, and then a long rough dusty descent under the Asian midsummer sun—an all-day trudge. Even for a healthy person it would be tiring.

But done it must be, pride insisted. For the then Mehtar or ruling prince of Chitral, unmistakably though obliquely, had shown that I was unwelcome. Two successive emissaries from him had conveyed messages: first his private secretary, then—with embarrassment—the young British commandant of the Chitral Scouts. Fighting, they politely emphasized on his behalf, was at that time going on between India and Pakistan in nearby Kashmir; Chitral had acceded to Pakistan; the newspaper which I represented was published in India; and I had been observed, His Highness learned, taking photographs in the bazaar. From this he had surmised that I might be engaged in secret service work. The continued presence of such a person in his State might seriously compromise him, impairing his newly-established relations with Pakistan.

Not until I reached the Malakand days later via Dir State and sought explanation from the newly-appointed Political Agent, Colonel Sherif Khan, did the affair dissolve absurdly into one of miscarried mail. The perplexed, remote Chitral authorities, throughout my stay, had (unknown to me) lacked any official papers explaining my presence. These only went in on muleback as I came out; there had been muddle about them in the Malakand office, owing to the change of Political Agents. The Pakistan Government, Sherif Khan assured me on the strength of wireless signals that had now passed, were far from suspecting the holidaying British editor of being engaged in espionage, or indeed of being partisan.

Meanwhile, however, politically riled and bewildered, and intestinally most uneasy, I was struggling under a June sun out of Chitral on a march beyond my sapped strength; to be sheltered for the night, cared for and set forth restored by Mahsuds.

Ten days before, trekking northward into Chitral, I had noticed on Dir territory an encampment below the track; and now, on its again coming into view, I decided to ask hospitality there. We were still seven hot stony miles from the rest-house, and I felt near collapse.

Rahim objected strongly.

"In those tents are bad men, Sahib. The goatherd we passed further back told me; they're on a road-making job. You could never spend a night with such people, they're not to be trusted. No doubt they'd rob you, then slit your throat."

Wayside argument elicited from Rahim an admission of prejudice. Before we came together he had served in the Frontier Corps, and had fought Mahsuds during the Waziristan campaign of 1936–37, seeing things he did not forget.

But in my depleted state visible prospect of rest and shelter mattered momentarily more than later possible throat-slitting. Under Rahim's scowls and muttered forebodings we accordingly made for the camp—to enjoy there kindness and good company deliciously memorable.

After some dubiously understood explanations the tottering, unknown, ashen-faced Englishman was invited in, allotted a tent and a good string-bed, and made to sip a syrupy liquid containing seeds soothing for dysentery, while warm water was prepared for his bath.

Later, after a sensuous exhausted rest, he was fed on breast of chicken with spiced rice and curd, was wrapped in blankets, and brought forth to watch a superb display of Mahsud dancing in his honour, the most unorganized, aboundingly vital, blood-stirring of all the Pathan dance-styles, scores of strong handsome young men rhythmically circling, stamping, and twirling their black bobbed hair round a seemingly crazed drummer, against a background of notched snow-peaks and apple-green sunset. Bodily weakness etched the scene's beauty on my mind.

Drowsing afterwards towards sleep in my tent, delighted by so wonderful an ending to a very bad day, I was roused by Rahim's abrupt reappearance. He looked more prophetic of doom than ever.

"We'll need to move at once, Sahib, it's exactly as I told you", he announced, refraining from adding that he thought me a fool. "These people have shot an Englishman. The message has just come up the valley. I'm packing your things."

It was startling news; and cross-questioning of Rahim left no doubt of its truth. Duncan, an able and much-loved Political Officer, had been assassinated in far-off Waziristan.

But I asked Rahim to desist. Though so tragic, the murder did

not affect me personally. I was a tribal guest; I had seen these people, and formed my opinion of them now. They would not harm me here—though later they might. And I fell asleep in confidence of safety, a participant in Pathan hospitality at its finest.

That was a good introduction to Mahsuds. And next day, before being set off refreshed on my few remaining miles to Dir, I noticed a thing half-sensed the previous evening. Mahsuds are fine material for portraiture.

They are people of extremes. There was scarcely a dull face among them. Many of the young men had an almost dazzling beauty, breath-taking as a jewelled dagger unsheathed. But should good looks have been unattainable there was often a swing to the opposite, a fiendish ugliness being achieved, itself of interest.

Good eyes, well-chiselled noses, clean-cut lips are factors in Mahsuds' beauty—if beautiful. And besides, as lure for the portrait-hunter, is a lack of inhibiting self-consciousness. Here are no creatures of reserve, no boxed-up introverts, but men whose features reflect what they feel. Superabundant vitality makes their expressions very mobile, and the younger faces frame admirably within the traditional arc of bobbed hair. So far as an inexpert may judge, they embody the Pathan characteristics in extreme form.

And they have power to draw the affection of foreigners. Not long after leaving that Dir encampment in 1948 I met the young widow of the assassinated officer. At the moment of tragedy she had been tending Mahsud sick in the little hospital at Wana, in South Waziristan. To feel any generalized resentment against the tribe never occurred to her, and she authorized me to say so in print—which I later did in "The Statesman" and the "Geographical Magazine." An individual fanatic had shot her man; that was part of the job's risk. And she wanted to go on helping the tribal sick and wounded.

At Bannu is a British missionary doctor whose sympathies for years have been strongly Mahsud. I met him again during my travels in 1952. Throughout the tribe his name is known; to mention it wherever one may meet Mahsuds—at Karachi or the Malakand, Kohat or Tanai—raises delighted grins and a flood of anecdote. At Tank on the edge of the Mahsud country live

Western medical ladies, long famous for work among the tribe. Several British officers of the Frontier Corps, the Political Service and the Constabulary have been Mahsud enthusiasts, who found the wrench hard when events caused mainly by the Afghan-Pakistani controversies of 1949 necessitated their leaving.

A pleasant little tale of Mahsud-Hindu cordiality may conclude this digression. As earlier mentioned, during my travels in Pakistan in 1951 while still editor I had with me, besides the faithful Rahim—after our 1948 doings somewhat less mistrustful of the rival tribe—what because of Indo-Pakistani estrangements was extraordinary: Raghu Raj Singh, my spirited Hindu motor-driver.

Now though the British or other foreigners, with their international passports, can without inordinate trouble get across the subcontinent's frontiers—other than the Kashmir cease-fire line—for an Indian or Pakistani of the poorer classes to do so, and plunge on into the unknown, is a formidable ordeal. The perplexities and unkindnesses of the new-fangled permit-system have to be faced,[1] and the terrors left by tales of the barbarities during the 1947 Partition. And Raghu had never before even been West of Delhi.

Throughout that 1951 trip, however, I never saw his courage falter. His only serious worry seemed to be lest he might unwittingly eat beef in his curries, the cow being for Hindus a very holy animal. (As member of a fighting caste, a Rajput, he could eat sheep or goat.) On our eventually reaching Peshawar I learned however that officialdom felt qualms about his travelling into the Khurram tribal areas.

"Of course there's no real risk," they said, "but you'd never forgive yourself if some fool shot him, would you?"

So he was left behind—unnecessarily, as it later turned out, for the local Khurram authorities felt no qualms at all. He was very disappointed at being thus deprived of further adventure; and on our return plied us with questions about what we had done, declaring indignantly that he was not a woman, to be kept idling in cities.

[1] Or rather at that time had to be. This system was abandoned—though amidst a fresh outburst of Indo-Pakistani controversy—in the autumn of 1952, when passports were introduced

"Then what about visiting some Mahsuds at Dargai with me tomorrow, Raghu? I expect to stay there a night or two."

How much idea, if any, he had of the tribe's reputation I was not sure; but he expressed eagerness, and off we set. From my experience of 1948, and friendships then formed, I was confident that the Mahsuds would show to advantage; and so it proved. We had dancing, lively talk, and the utmost kindness in dramatically picturesque surroundings under the Malakand hills.

Afterwards Raghu remarked: "I did like those people. As a Hindu of course I felt a little strange at first, but they were so hospitable and friendly. Could I write them a letter of thanks, d'you think, Sahib, in my Hindi script? I can't write Urdu properly. Would they mind?"

We posted it next day.

PLATE 17

Right: My Hindu motor-driver Raghu Raj Singh, a Rajput from U.P.

Left: Mahsud tribesman, momentarily reflecting the characteristic diabolical mood

PLATE 18. Murree: Old wayside beggar, playing one of the varieties of Asian violin

Chapter 13

GOVERNMENT IN EXILE

AS Rahim and I (without Gulmar) set forth from the Shahid Hamid's house in March 1952 for Muzafferabad, the morning sparkled, effervesced. Two days' rain had washed all dust from the air; it was exquisitely clear, and fragrant with the heady perfumes of the brief Punjab spring, perhaps the most exciting spring in the world. At the toll barrier, where the hill road to Murree begins, boys rushed forward, trying to sell us cigarettes, oranges, bananas, and good British chocolate—unrationed. At breakfast yesterday in 'Pindi my little niece Shahnaz, I remembered, had managed to eat about the equivalent of a fortnight's British butter ration.

We wriggled up through sub-Himalayan scrub country, and the plains were a map unrolling, clear to the horizon's flat rim. Over 'Pindi alone spread a little opacity, a thin brown stratum of smoke.

The Murree area during 1946–47 was the scene of wild doings. Hindu, Sikh, and some British property had been attacked; Muslim puritans burned down the famous brewery, source of much pleasure to Allied troops during World War II. Reports published at the time in the Indian Press had suggested that little of the town remained. They much exaggerated; nevertheless, during the last few miles before we reached the crest at about 7,000 ft., unrepaired blackened shells of several buildings were visible.

With Darjeeling, Naini Tal, Mussoorie and Simla, Murree ranked among the main Himalayan hill-stations of the old undivided India. At Partition it was the only one that went to Pakistan. I had not been here before, but knew the others. They were pleasant places to live in. All had a distinctively Indo-British social flavour, and presented much the same appearance to the eye: ayahs and bearers pushing prams; officials and Army officers in tweed coats and grey slacks; trim bungalows with painted iron roofs, and gardens gay with European flowers; winding paths and jingling mule-caravans; tattered hillmen crowding the precarious

wooden buildings of the bazaar. There was a distinctive smell too, of pines and mule-droppings and wood-smoke.

All, except Naini, possessed this further item: unlike most mountain resorts of Europe, they were perched along the summit and uppermost flanks of a ridge. What an admirable scenic device, I thought, as our car reached the top; for the wide northward views thus suddenly provided of snowy Himalayan ranges had heartlifting grandeur. And Murree is less cumbered with evergreens than the eastward hill-stations. Great deciduous trees columned the slopes, wintrily leafless still, through which the ice of remote peaks glittered beneath a hard blue sky.

Then came a steady descent of 4,000 ft. or more, down a huge buttressed mountain-flank to the Jhelum river, deep in its gorge. Most of the country was open, fertile, cut into an infinity of tiny terraced fields, mainly brown at this season, but here and there green with young wheat; and all this vast landscape—delicious spectacle—was faintly powdered with fruit blossom. Gradually the snow-peaks withdrew, eclipsed, as we went, by nearer forested ranges. Beside the road aspen trees had donned new foliage, almost as pale as the fruit blossom. There was elegant Persian lilac also, greener and more forward, the mauve flowers just unfolding; and tall, droopy-leaved eucalyptus.

Wafts of warmer air smote us as we neared the Jhelum—and the first sight again of the depressing military objects signalizing approach to a zone of Indo-Pakistani tension: motor transport parks, hospitals painted with conspicuous red crosses, camps, billets, weapons, uniformed men.

At Kohala a fine bridge took us from Pakistan into Kashmir territory across the thick, powerfully-muscled brown river; and immediately evidence of bomb-damage began. Indian aircraft, just avoiding Pakistani territory, had sought to smash the bridge at its further, Kashmir end. All the way beside the Jhelum from there to Domel camps were crammed into spaces between precipice and water; and at Domel were heavier marks of bomb-damage. Here meet two rivers and three roads. And as both sides of the bridge lie in Kashmir territory, repeated efforts had been made to destroy it—without success, but the structure was much pock-marked. Near Muzafferabad was evidence also of damage from arson, presumably done by the Pathan raiders to Hindu and Sikh buildings during their first onrush via Abbottabad in October

1947. This was the route by which young Gulmar must soon afterwards have come.

Muzafferabad is pleasantly situated, its white buildings dominating a riverside cliff. Though grim things of several sorts had lately happened here, and political doubts befogged its future, and nearby, behind a sort of iron curtain, mysterious Indian Forces stood poised, it seemed happy, carefree. Faces were handsome, and less sombre than in the Sudhans' country. Some showed the delicacy of colouring and line typical of Srinagar Kashmiris, but more vitality. There were cheerful smiles for the stranger—and apparently no suspicion of him when he photographed.

Below the rest-house lay a ziarat[1] of some renown, peaceful and picturesque, visited by pilgrims; its fluttering red-and-white banners hung beneath peepul trees in the courtyard, and a fine whitewashed doorway gave access to the inner sanctum.

The guardian introduced his son, a youth of an austere, withdrawn beauty, in shawl and turban. As that night I slid towards sleep, a light tenor voice was borne through the windows from below, the son's voice I felt sure, singing a mournful, cascading little air, a religious poem, repeated again and again with delicate variations. Growls of distant thunder sometimes overlaid it; or sudden gusts of wind snatched the notes away. But the song proceeded, outliving the storm. Faint flashes of lightning fused behind my eyelids with images of the singer's calm, dedicated young features, as sleep came.

Governments in exile tend to faction and self-mistrust, and to envy of their hosts. This was true of the European Governments in London during World War II; also of the Burmese Government in Simla. The Azad Kashmir Government was not in the full sense exiled, for it administered a little residual territory. Nevertheless many of its personnel were cut off from their homes; they felt unhappy, frustrated. Some of the usual symptoms consequently appeared; spasms of internal rivalry, and of vexation with the Pakistani Government.

Azad Kashmir's two leading politicians were Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas and Sardar Ibrahim. At the time of my visit both were out of office, having disagreed with the Pakistani Government—and with each other. The former, whom I later met at

[1] Muslim shrine

Abbottabad, had won fame primarily as spokesman of the Muslims in and around Jammu. As explained earlier, these, half a million or so, had almost totally disintegrated in the autumn of 1947. About 200,000 simply vanished, being presumably butchered or killed by epidemics and exposure while seeking to get away; the rest had fled into Pakistani Punjab. In consequence, his personal following no longer existed as an effective political force; he had moreover suffered much family sorrow. Imprisoned first by the Maharajah's Government, then by Sheikh Abdullah's, he had been in jail at Srinagar while the calamities were in progress.

Sardar Ibrahim was a leader of the Sudhans, the backbone of the original Poonchi rising against the Maharajah's misrule. Reports that his influence had lately waned among them seemed inaccurate; when at Trarkhel and elsewhere in Sudhnuti I had heard him enthusiastically spoken of. But he had perhaps gained too much prominence when young; this, it was said, made him an awkward associate.

Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas's successor as President of the Azad Kashmir Government was Mir Waiz Mohammad, formerly Imam of the Jama mosque in Srinagar. He gave me an interview. Handsome, brown-bearded, a man of dignified courtesy, he was at a disadvantage as administrator from ignorance of English, still almost a necessity for Government work in Delkaria. Officials termed "Advisers" temporarily headed the Ministries under him, permanent civil servants of the former Princely regime, among them the intelligent and Westernized Mr Yusuf.

Here lay a minor paradox. Though the Government at Muzafferabad was politically weaker than Sheikh Abdullah's Government in Srinagar, certainly now and probably even before Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas and Sardar Ibrahim withdrew, it was stronger in trained Muslim officials. Most of these had managed to come over to the Azad Kashmir side in 1947, or had been released later during the internationally organized exchanges of civilian prisoners.

Conditions of work for them were uncomfortable and overcrowded. The Administration functioned in an improvised Secretariat which had been the local District Court. It had recently been rebuilt; the Mahsuds and other Pathans had burnt it down during their first onrush in October 1947.

As a result of enquiries in Karachi and 'Pindi, of what I had

PLATE III

Left: Barbering the ...ad Kashmir troops ...kes you cheerful

Left: The scr... of the ... guardian of the shrine, ... Muzaffarabad dedicat... ed, austere withdrawn

seen and heard during the Mirpur tour, of talks with Ataullah in the car, and of this visit now to Muzafferabad, I had begun to form some more detailed impressions of the Kashmir problem. They would need reconsidering, doubtless, when I got back from the Gilgit Agency, and again should I succeed in visiting Srinagar. In parts they failed to fit, leaving the jigsaw incomplete; but that did not matter at this stage.

The outstanding first item was the improbability of Kashmir in its original form being reunited by any political initiative from an Indian-supported Government in Srinagar. Feeling against Hindus throughout Azad Kashmir, though it had no immediate target, seemed rigid, unalterable. It rested on two things: ancient memories of oppression and neglect over many decades by the Maharajah's Hindu officials; and indignation at more recent sufferings—from economic dislocation now, and from Indian bombings during "the war."

Such being the general sentiment, Kashmiri reunion could be brought about by India from Srinagar in only two ways: by military conquest, or—in the long run—by Communism. The former, though physically still possible, I supposed, if enough force were assembled, might be very troublesome, as the fighting of 1947-49 had shown. Moreover it might prove barren, owing to even profounder popular bitterness being created, or a strategical running sore like that formerly suffered by the British on the North-West Frontier—for doubtless the Poonchi guerillas would not only rise again, but get help from further West. Nor could a fresh campaign be fought under the 1947-49 conditions. These, in some ways, had been to India's advantage, particularly as regards unopposed use of aircraft. Any such campaign now would presumably be part of a wider Indo-Pakistan conflict waged mainly in the plains, whose effects were unpredictable.

Communism, as a possible outcome of the Kashmir dispute, had been in some minds almost from the start. There had been editorials and correspondence on it in "The Statesman" before the end of 1947. Soviet Russia almost adjoined Kashmir. Now Communist China had also become a neighbour. Of the existence of any pro-Communist leanings in Azad Kashmir, or even of interest in Communism, I had not seen the least evidence. Nevertheless, looking ahead, it could be imagined that conditions might develop in which the people's standard of living through-

out Delkaria gradually became so pressed down, owing to the continuance of the Indo-Pakistani feud and to heavy military outlay in its support, that they turned to Communism as the only way out of misery. This might be especially so in the border regions. In moments of gloom about the deep historical and religious roots which fed the apparently unending feud I had even suggested publicly that, if there was any part of the globe which might benefit from Communism, a smasher of cultures and religions, it was perhaps Delkaria.[1]

Possibly a germ of how Kashmiri reunion might one day be brought about lay in Sheikh Abdullah's agrarian reforms. These were much more radical than anything yet attempted on the subcontinent; they had stirred alarm among the propertied classes of both countries. But such matters at present were mere long-term guess-work. Throughout Azad Kashmir, so far as I could judge, dislike of India, and consequently of any Indian-backed Administration, was so strong that it practically excluded other considerations.

Moreover, as in the Punjab, the events of 1947-48 had changed the population's structure. It was now homogeneous. No minorities remained; probably there was not a Hindu or Sikh left. This created a basic self-confidence. Even the political disagreements between leading personalities, apparently so serious, might be merely its by-product. I was told that they caused no despondency; that Azad Kashmir felt sure enough of itself to afford such frills. This sentiment seemed reflected, too, in the remarkable practice of cultivating right up to the cease-fire line, such as I had seen at Tain. I was later informed that this was no local freak; it occurred elsewhere. Employment throughout the territory was good, even though capital enterprise and commerce stagnated because of the major political impasse and the fruitless U.N. debates. The cream of Azad Kashmir's youth was enrolled in the levies, many thousands strong, and getting good pay. The extensive road-building had brought prosperity to remote villages; bus services were doing well.

This impression of stability required scrutiny of an idea which commentators on Kashmir had been propounding of late: that, in default of something better, the cease-fire line might be recognized as the permanent frontier. Was this feasible?

[1] e.g. at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, January 1952

The answer, from what I had seen and heard hitherto, seemed unfortunately No. Such a demarcation, depending on the accident of where campaigning armies halted at a particular date, would admittedly be very artificial. But the main difficulty lay elsewhere. Everyone I had spoken to since arrival in Karachi six weeks ago still considered Kashmir vital for Pakistan. So long as an unfriendly Power held Srinagar and the adjacent Vale by force, her existence was felt to be at hazard. Without a fair plebiscite there, enabling the notoriously timid inhabitants of this Muslim-majority region to decide their future, India's unrelaxed grasp was thought capable of only one explanation. Suggestions that genuine secularist principles inspired it, or Pandit Nehru's Kashmiri ancestry, were brushed aside. The motive, Pakistanis believed, was strategic: to keep a jumping-off ground from which, when opportunity offered, their country could be crushed.

It was irrelevant whether this interpretation contained truth. What primarily mattered was Pakistanis' and Azad Kashmiris' conviction of it. In their view India had never honestly accepted the Partition of 1947, and was bent on its eventual undoing. The circumstances of Pakistan's birth, and the subsequent course of Indian policy, were reckoned proof. For scores of miles along the grand trunk route between Lahore and 'Pindi the country's most important road and railway, running close beside one another, lay within striking range of Indian-held Kashmir. The conspicuous vulnerability of this main communications-artery was a living fear in Pakistani minds—sharpening another fear: that India, possessing control of the headwaters in Kashmir and further East, might starve the irrigation-canals which serve Pakistan's main grain-belt through this vital region.

The notion that the cease-fire line might consolidate into a lasting frontier thus appeared illusory. Unless sentiment altered, or a solid Indo-Pakistani agreement were reached, here was a part of the globe which would menace the peace of the subcontinent and perhaps of Asia.

Shortly before Rahim and I were due to return from Muzaffarabad to 'Pindi, Ataullah turned up, to inspect the hospital. It was good to see him. He had been stimulating company on the Mirpur trip. We would travel back together.

The weather was very different: a grey day, with bolsters of dense cloud dragging along the hilltops. As we climbed the tortuous slope towards Murree, the further valleys were inky pools.

Ataullah had a first-class mind, wide-ranging, massive, rather Teutonic. He was also, from what I had seen of his contacts with junior medical personnel, a firm but sympathetic administrator. Because he had been in touch with the Kashmir affair from the start, as doctor not as politician, he seemed a useful person on whom to test my recently-formed impressions; I did so as we drove.

The talk then switched to religion. Unlike many of the young Pakistanis I had been with, who were patriots, but apparently lax in religious observance or belief, "secular" in Pandit Nehru's sense, Ataullah was devout. Further, he was a Qadiani, member of the heterodox 19th-century sect which Sunni Muslims—who are the great majority—view with disapproval. But the sect has energy and enthusiasm; much of the Islamic proselytizing in Western countries is of Qadiani origin. Its foremost member in Pakistan is the Foreign Minister, Sir Zafrullah Khan.

Like Khwaja Nazimuddin during my talk with him in Karachi —though their approaches were different—Ataullah stressed Islam's practical quality.

"The Western nations are in their present mess", he declared, "mainly because they haven't seriously tried to apply their religion; and the nature of their religion is such that, if you don't mind my saying so, it can't be fully applied."

This was not true, he contended, of Islam; it was simpler, more direct, less encased in antique and involved dogma. The only major points of intellectual resistance which he had found in talks with his Western friends had been on the segregation of women and on polygamy; and with regard to these, the social chaos nowadays caused in the West by marital unhappiness and divorce might suggest that, after all, there was something to be said for Muslim practice.

Nevertheless, Ataullah agreed, Islam had been in retreat throughout the last three centuries. Its apparent recent advance in what was now Pakistan was somewhat misleading. This he considered scarcely religious in origin at all; it was a cultural and nationalist movement against the Hindus, or against the

threat of Hindu numerical dominance after the British had gone. The Faith needed modernizing; and recent trends in science might make this comparatively easy. The mullahs were a menace. If their merely static attitude prevailed, the people would eventually cast them off, and perhaps Islam too—in that event dragging the country straight towards Communism.

"In Asia", he added, "we have been only copiers in modern science, not originators yet; so we easily get hypnotized by it. Many of us nowadays are in much more danger than you Westerners of becoming complete materialists."

Chapter 14

GILGITI DAYS

A PAKISTANI friend and I stood in his office at 'Pindi before a wall-map, a huge thing weighted by a wooden roller. Tomorrow I would be leaving for Gilgit again, and the Karakoram country beyond; we were discussing the journey. The map made it look very enticing. North-East of Gilgit there seemed more very deep brown (for high peaks) and white (for even higher ones) than anywhere in Southern Asia. Up in the map's top left-hand corner was about the most densely mountainous region in the world.

The map displayed all the former Indian Empire. My eye wandered. How vast the changes had been! Politically they were progress, presumably; they had at any rate been fascinating to live through. But looked at, as now, in terms not of nationalism but of simple geography and locomotion, they seemed retrograde, indeed crazy. When I first landed at Bombay in 1930 one big unit, within which people could move freely, had stretched from Victoria Point in Southern Burma all the way to Chitral and the Khyber. Now this had been broken to bits, each bit being kept separate by officialdom from the other, necessitating some fresh formality from the traveller, some new-fangled deviation or delay. Viewed from the aspect of getting about the globe fast in an age of great mechanical facility, the changes were even uglier and less intelligent than the altered face of Central Europe in 1918 after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Beginning from the right came Burma. Until 1937 it had been part of India. Now it was not even in the Commonwealth—and was largely in chaos, split into segments which expanded and contracted according to the fortunes of an obscure civil war, some of them Government-controlled, others controlled by various kinds of rebel.

Next came Assam, part of India admittedly, but connected with it—this item often overlooked—only by a thin awkward wedge of territory in the extreme North, beneath the Himalaya. To reach it was a bothersome, circuitous business. Its direct

PLATE 19. In Gilgit bazaar: a trader from Singkiang

PLATE 20

Off to Gilgit again: Pakistani Dakota in clear weather at about 12,000 ft

routes to India all lay across East Bengal, now part of Pakistan, foreign territory therefore, blocked from India by frontier posts and customs regulations.

East Bengal, however, was even queerer. It was not joined to the rest of Pakistan at all; a huge 1,000-mile gap divided the two. Within this gap lay the main bulk of India, still much the largest unit. Then came West Pakistan, big too, more so than East Bengal, though paradoxically less populous. And in all the long frontier between West Pakistan and India, perhaps for 1,300 miles, there were now only three places where travellers could cross: two by air-route and one by land-route—the horrible Khokhrapar route in the Jodhpur desert, used by refugees. How barbaric and grotesque!

Up beyond West Pakistan moreover lay the most confused, segmented, tragic area of all, Kashmir, virtually in three pieces, of which one, the largest, Indian-held, was cut off from the others by a wall impenetrable for ordinary travellers, the cease-fire line supervised by the U.N.

Of the two Pakistani-held pieces, that to which I was now going, the Gilgit Agency—a fact little known—was for most of the year almost as disconnected from the other, and from West Pakistan, as was East Bengal. During three or four summer months a precarious new jeep-track over the Babusar pass linked it to 'Pindi or Peshawar. At other times this was snow-blocked; the only links then were by plane or wireless. Since Gilgit staged its little revolution in November 1947, throwing off allegiance to the Maharajah of Kashmir, it had maintained itself by these very modern means.

Beyond, again, lay Chinese Turkestan. Caravan-borne trade used to flow regularly each summer between Gilgit and Kashgar over the high passes. Two season ago the Chinese Communists arrived, and stopped this: yet another impenetrable modern wall!

On April 3, Gilgit-bound, I set off from 'Pindi yet again. Rahim, I knew, disliked the prospect of the air journey, but he sturdily declared he wanted to come, realizing I had need of him.

Weather, plane, and pilot, this time were different. We suffered no preliminary meteorological alarms; the day was cloudless and still, ideal for flying. The plane, a civilian one, was of a type rather more suited to the route owing to its higher

ceiling, though scarcely describable as modern or ideal: a Dakota, freshly painted in green "Orient Skyfreighter." And as pilot we had one of the many young displaced Poles employed by Pakistan, Maksymowicz, blue-eyed, handsome, with a chestful of ribbons, three rows, most of them British campaign medals. I had heard of him. He was said to be Orient Airways' crack pilot, hero of various exploits, among them of stunting a Dakota in such a way as to throw off a parachute which had enwrapped its tail during a supply-dropping operation.

Take-off was a bucket-seated, sideways-facing affair. The aisle was crammed with roped-in freight, leaving little leg-room. Besides Rahim and me, there were ten passengers: a major of the Northern Scouts; four high-cheekboned men of Gilgiti type, wearing woollen roll-rimmed caps; a grave Pathan in blue turban, fingering a string of amber beads; three burqa-enshrouded ladies who had conversed squeakily through their integuments before emplaning; a restless small brown boy.

Soon after we were airborne, Maksymowicz asked me to the cockpit. Our course, I saw, lay much further East than during the R.P.A.F. trip. Evidently in this plane and on so clear a day we had no need to grope along the Indus gorge; we aimed straight at the high mountains, and were climbing fast.

Murree soon appeared, crowning one of countless similar forested hills of about 7,000 ft.; its tiny roofs spilt down the upper slopes. Then came Abbottabad on the left, rectilinear, military, distant; then Muzafferabad immediately below. I could identify the Domel bridge, the little white Secretariat, even, I thought, the rest-house.

We had been up 25 minutes now, had reached 11,000 ft., but were still climbing, towards a great jumble of transverse snow-ranges ahead, alarming of aspect, especially one discoloured tooth-like peak. The Kishenganga river was identifiable. Its upper waters curved away to the right, towards Tithwal and the cease-fire line presumably, country where the Indian Army had once been harassed by Mahsud guerillas, among them 13-year-old Gulmar.

Maksymowicz touched my arm, pointed ahead. Beyond the frightening congestion of jagged nearby summits had emerged something remote, detached, palely cloud-like: Nanga Parbat. We had reached 14,000 ft. now; I felt rather headachy and

breathless from the quick altitude-change. A rock-wall higher than ourselves pressed heavily in on the right. Beneath was the Kaghan valley, which the Pakistani authorities in default of Kashmir had been publicizing as a tourist resort. Through it ran the jeep-track which crested the Babusar, for a few summer months linking Gilgit with the outside world. The little road could just be traced, until its upper part disappeared under thick snow, obviously still quite impassable.

The big toothed peak had come unpleasantly near. Its sides were too steep to carry much snow. Ice impacted in crevices on its bare dirty-coloured slabs twinkled in the sun. Its top must have been about 2,000 ft. above us. We were at 15,000.

Maksymowicz caressed the levers, the engine-throb changed, we had finished climbing. The toothed peak gradually passed behind. Through gaps in a chaos of notched ice and rock on our right Nanga Parbat at moments re-emerged, serene, nearer.

"How adorable she is!" exclaimed Maksymowicz, with a graceful wave, un-English. "And she is so strange! Some days she withdraws, looks so far away. Then she may come quite close. It's something in the light. Isn't she beautiful today!" He spoke exultingly, intimately, as a lover.

We were now breaking over the smooth top of the Babusar, a waste of printless snow. "No 'abominable snowmen' here!" Maksymowicz observed. The jeep-track, in worm-like loops, fell steeply forward to the Indus gorge, a dark abyss. But the eye had no time to bother with this; an immense new view ahead caught it up. Nanga Parbat indeed towered gloriously on the right; but in front, beyond Gilgit, very far off though nevertheless also huge, was something which, during my last visit, had not hinted that it could disclose itself at this stage: the remote glistening line of the Karakoram.

Individual summits rose in it, which Maksymowicz could name: Haramosh towards the East, Rakaposhi in the centre, of a wonderful shape, then another fine one further left, he thought perhaps Kampiré Diór, the prettiest mountain-name I had ever heard. Behind Rakaposhi, so far as the map could tell us from this angle, lay Hunza, my ultimate destination, to be reached laboriously on foot from Gilgit.

We slid towards the now-familiar Gilgit airstrip rather fast. After touch-down, returning to the passenger-cabin, I found

Rahim holding his head with his hands, quite dazed; I felt smitten with shame. Like most others back there, where it was bumpier, he had been very airsick. But he complained also of sharp pain in both ears, and now his nose began to bleed.

Gilgit is a pleasant place to idle in, which I did for a while—partly on account of Rahim's earache—before starting on our expedition. Khan Faridullah Shah, the Political Agent, had left word that unfortunately he was away on tour, but that on no account must I stay anywhere except in his bungalow; his head clerk Humayun Beg would see to my needs.

Both bungalow and garden were charming—other than the main drawing-room decoration, which, if imagined by Faridullah's British predecessors, would have made them writhe. It consisted—in handsome wooden mounts—of fins from two of the several 500-lb. bombs dropped on defenceless Gilgit in July 1948 by the Royal Indian Air Force. Inscribed metal plaques gave particulars of the affair. During my two-hours' visit three weeks ago I had failed to notice these historic objects, being preoccupied with that huge breakfast.

Spring had since come with sub-tropical speed. Gilgit's altitude is less than 5,000 ft. The garden, now that I had leisure to inspect it, disclosed much pleasing further detail. Besides the trout-pool, the little vinery, the gurgling water channels, there were trees in rich variety, well spaced: dark dignified junipers and cypresses; poplars, chenars and willows in bright spring foliage; graceful Persian lilac; apricots, gnarled of trunk, whose petals had already fallen; apples, pears and deep pink peaches in full bloom. Beyond the trout-pool, poultry were being raised in incubators, to the amazement of the Gilgitis, who had disbelieved in the feasibility of this. An agricultural officer recently graduated from Peshawar University supervised such doings, a likeable youngster, full of plans for improving local husbandry.

Within low stone walls between the few residences of officials and the bazaar ran little willow-bordered jeep-wide roads, shoe-deep in thick white dust. This is arid country; rain seldom falls. The streams which irrigate fields and gardens are snow-fed from the highest, grandest peaks. Lower than these, filling the middle distance of sky, oppressing the mind if too much looked at, were enormous brown rock-masses, 7,000 ft. thick perhaps, stark,

PLATE IV. Shepherd lad at lambing-time, in the hills of Galgit

almost wholly treeless, grassless, dreadfully monotonous, the mere ribs and vertebrae and pelvises of undistinguished middle-sized mountains without covering of green vegetable flesh.

Gilgit had reminders of the British regime: a Christian cemetery, well-kept, though graves were few; a club, with a sports pavilion, on which a notice tersely ordered: "Serve God, Honour the King." Pakistani officers played tennis beside this, their sentiments on religion and royalty not quite those in the donor's mind. A small stone clock-tower in the bazaar commemorated King George V, its hands stuck at 9.10. Nearby a painted board, also in English, declared: "One-Way Traffic, Keep Left." This seemed finicky in a Central Asian townlet where few could even read Urdu, and where motor transport until quite recently did not exist, and the passage of a jeep was still a stare-stirring event.

The bazaar was a friendly place, perhaps too friendly. As you wandered in it, camera ready, you became as it were the nucleus of a human comet, dragging in your wake a talkative, cheerful throng, vigorous with queries and advice. At sight of this, prospective victims of photography froze into rigid, self-conscious attitudes, dashing your hopes of good portraiture. But there was much to see: huge woolly two-humped Bactrian camels, many times the bulk of the ordinary Indian camel of the plains; slit-eyed, sparse-bearded Kazak vendors, nomads from Chinese Turkestan wearing strange hats of felt and fur, stranded nowadays in Gilgit by the Communists' stoppage of the caravan-routes; or—if you wanted something modern—cheap framed photos on the open-air stalls of Oriental film-stars, probably Hindu, for Pakistan as yet almost lacked a film industry.

At sunset I stood with Humayun Beg on what is said to be the longest suspension bridge in Asia. This and the wireless station had apparently been the Indian Air Force's main objectives; but like the Kohala and Domel bridges over the Jhelum it had escaped being hit. Thin structures are difficult targets. Bending and rising within the wire enclosure at the far end, facing West, a solitary Scouts sepoy prayed on stone slabs. Humayun scanned the clear blue waters for trout; I watched wagtails stepping delicately on the bank, or the tranquil colour-changes on the sun-kissed snow-crests. A triangular segment of what was perhaps Haramosh, high behind the others, kept pink long after they were coldly grey. From the bazaar, on the still air, slighly unsynchronized,

came the calls to devotion of many moazzin. As we walked back, the little town was already almost dark; lamps had been dimmed, the wooden shop-fronts padlocked. Gilgitis retire early, to save fuel, which transport from the distant plains makes costly.

Rahim awaited me at the bungalow. He was better. High in cloudless black space above the crags Sirius flashed; poplar-boles stood pale in the dark garden; water tinkled in the little channels.

Faridullah Shah soon returned, genial as ever, an excellent host. And at meals we were joined by Sherif Khan—brother of the Commandant of the Bodyguard at Karachi—whom I had first met in 1948 when he had charge of the Khyber Rifles, and later, under absurd and dramatic circumstances already recounted, in the Malakand. He now commanded the Northern Scouts, like the Khyber Rifles a component of the renowned Frontier Corps, but new, formed since Partition.

The Frontier Corps is perhaps a unique organization: led by officers seconded from the Army, but not part of it, a locally recruited mobile militia, proud of its distinctive semi-civilian status. It patrols an immense territory along Pakistan's difficult Western fringes, all the strip of arid, hilly borderland from the Shyok river beneath the Karakoram glaciers to where the warm Arabian Sea washes the shores of Baluchistan. It abuts therefore on four foreign countries: Persia, Afghanistan, Chinese Turkestan and Indian-held Kashmir. And just behind the narrow North-Eastern bit of Afghanistan, the Wakhan, lies a fifth: Soviet Russia.

Probably the Frontier Corps' best-known units are the Tochi and the South Waziristan Scouts. These fought strenuous campaigns in the 1930's.

Already in the later British days the Corps' functions and strength in these hills were enlarging, those of the Army contracting. For it was clear that the Army, composed of men of diverse origins recruited from afar, often got itself gravely disliked, arousing the tribes' resentment by its mere presence; its heavy equipment, too, proved sometimes ill-suited for the sort of patrol or skirmish required. Compared with the Frontier Corps, it lacked elasticity.

When Pakistan came into existence, the new Government soon withdrew the Army from the Pathan tribal areas, assigning many

of its duties to the Frontier Corps. An Islamic State, it was felt, could do this; the tribes would be friendlier than to an infidel foreign Raj.

Soon after, a further extension became imperative. The Gilgitis, after revolt against the Kashmir Maharajah, had asked for Pakistan's help. The Gilgit Scouts, controlled in British days by the Political Agent, were not organized to deal with so big and dangerous a turn of events. A new unit, the Northern Scouts, was therefore hastily called into being and integrated with the Frontier Corps, assuming responsibility for huge areas never patrolled before—and for harassing the advance of the Indian Forces.

It had several spirited actions in the 1947-49 campaign to its credit, including one which involved a winter march said to have been thought physically impossible—by both sides. In accordance with Frontier Corps practice, most of its personnel were recruited locally, from Gilgitis and Hunzawals, perhaps the world's hardiest mountaineers. So vast and rocky was its territory, so snow-bound in winter, that without a helicopter the commandant could hardly hope to visit all its posts in less than a year. Many of them were isolated from November to March. The occupants then lived on stores brought by pack-mule or parachute in the summer, and on autumn-slain sheep buried in the snow.

The Northern and the Gilgit Scouts, between them, were now considered strong enough to protect the Gilgit Agency against anything except a major onslaught from Indian-held Kashmir or Communist China.

Neither Faridullah nor Sherif Khan had been here in the autumn of 1947. They were Pathan officers recently arrived. But from information they had got, and by asking residents such as Humayun Beg, I pieced together some account of what had happened in this far-off place at that confused and hazardous time.

Gilgit's allegiance to the Maharajah, always tenuous, had become more so in 1935, when under a fresh agreement its administration (though not that of Astór) was completely taken over by Delhi. This in local eyes meant that the British Raj had become stronger; and the abrupt, dramatic relinquishment of power in August 1947 found the people unprepared. Government servants,

in the Gilgit Scouts or civilian posts, were shocked to realize that, after being in British employ, they now depended for their jobs on the Kashmir Durbar.

Soon they watched with misgiving the arrival of the Hindu Maharajah's cousin as Wazir or Governor; he took up residence in the Political Agent's bungalow. He seems to have been unable to give them much reassurance; apprehensions grew. At this stage Gilgitis, it appears, had heard little or nothing of the insurrection in Poonch; the two movements were not co-ordinated. But the local population was overwhelmingly Muslim; enough was known of the frightful happenings in the Punjab to make the prospect of any tightened Hindu control very disquieting. Alarm was sharpened by rumours of an impending advance on Gilgit by the Maharajah's garrison at Bunji in Astór, down the river on the main Srinagar mule-track.

When, towards the end of October, the Maharajah's accession to India was announced, the leading Gilgitis decided to act. Two young British officers who remained were approached. They indicated no opposition; probably they sympathized.[1] Telegraph wires were thereupon cut. The Governor found himself surrounded in his bungalow, and was told that he was under arrest. The few local Hindus were interned.

Gilgit's insurrection, at a time of terrible barbarity elsewhere, seems to have been a gentlemanly little episode. The Indian bombings did not affect this spirit. The imprisoned Governor is said to have been soon attending polo matches in his captors' company. According to Gilgiti report, when he eventually got back to Srinagar, freed under an agreement for exchange of prisoners, he fell into some disfavour by declaring that he had been excellently treated, and refusing to admit ill usage. The Gilgit Treasury was handed over intact to the Pakistani representative when, by invitation, he arrived from the distant plains.

[1] See also p. 88

PLATE V

Right: Rahim amidst the flowers of spring

Left: Colourful Gilgi boyhood: a group i the bazaar

Chapter 15

ROAD TO HUNZA

ON April 6 Rahim and I set off from Gilgit for Hunza. We were to cover the first 32 miles by jeep, on a newly-built road, or rather track.

Hitler used to talk about "new orders"; he had a "new order" for Europe. The jeep, in locomotion, had made a new order for mountainous Central Asia—as I had already begun to realize at Tain and Palandri. If you are acquainted with this vehicle only in flat country, you think of it as another kind of car. In the wilder, craggier parts of the world you appreciate your mistake. The jeep, you find, differs from a car as a speed-boat from a yacht. It does things impossible for a car as ordinarily conceived; takes tracks of a narrowness, bends of a sharpness, slopes of a steepness outside your experience.

We were also, there could be no doubt, approaching a new order in mountain scenery. The wall-map before which I had stood in 'Pindi had indicated this; browsings in Faridullah's bookshelves emphasized it. In Europe, even North America, a 15,000-ft. peak is thought interesting, usually has prestige, at least possesses a name. In the parts of the Himalaya hitherto known to me—beyond Simla or Darjeeling for instance, or near Almora in U.P., or in the ranges of Kashmir within easy reach of Srinagar—such recognition had generally been reserved for the 20,000-footers. In the Karakoram, however, as Faridullah's library made clear, 20,000-footers signify nothing. No one bothers to name them, or to try to count them; they are mere multitudinous tiny dots or triangles on a map. What matter are the 24,000-footers and above. This wonderful region contains no fewer than 33 peaks of that order. Many even of these are nameless, mere symbols and numerals.

That morning, haze or cirrus hid most of the snow-tops normally visible from Gilgit. On the brown middle-sized mountains inertly reposed cotton-wool, lumps of cumulus forgotten by the wind. As we shoved bedding-rolls and packages into the jeep a

rarity descended upon us, large sparse raindrops—locally a good omen for travellers, according to the sanguine, hospitable Faridullah. That might be; but a wet march after leaving the jeep at Chalt would be no fun, nor withdrawal into invisibility of Rakaposhi and the other great summits.

The vehicle, when launched on its way, as usually happens in Delkaria, carried an unscheduled load. Besides the driver, Rahim and me, and our impedimenta, we were now taking the cook's son, a bright lad of about ten, clad in little Gilgiti cloak and round Gilgiti cap; he wanted to visit his mother, at a village en route. And at the last moment appeared a sturdy, square-faced youth, the Assistant Political Agent's orderly it turned out, pleading to come also. Hearing of our imminent departure, he had just risen from a hospital bed, having lain there for ten days with an undiagnosed fever. He, too, wanted to visit his village, a different one, to die among his family he said, or if God willed to get better. Would we please take him? It seemed medically crazy, but no official obstacle had apparently been raised to his leaving hospital, and the driver declared he would die if he stayed; so we packed him in. I felt his pulse: 120. He coughed raspingly.

We first drove some miles back down the valley, by the strangely azure waters of the Gilgit river. Then the muddy Hunza river frothed in on the left, and here we turned. It was a narrower valley; the brown rock-masses became even more oppressive, enclosing us. They were utterly bare. The size of the landscape seemed without meaning, mere magnitude for magnitude's sake. And mile after mile of the valley-floor was almost bare too, sustaining among the sand and stones only scattered tufts of spring herbage and grasses, sun-shrivelled already, though this was but early April. The upper sky cleared after a while; corners of white peaks above and behind the confining brown walls pierced the blue.

The jeep-track, though efficiently engineered for its purpose, was very uneven, and we progressed in a succession of forward rushes and sudden decelerations, with noisy gear-changes and much braking. Occasionally the track took us venturing forth between stone guide-posts among the crimped grey dunes on the valley-floor, traversing drifts where wheels might whizz gripless in sand; more often, preferring solid ground, it wriggled along the in-cut lower rim of the great leftward rock-wall, over slabs

and shelves, across scree-tips, into small sharp side-nullahs or up steep slopes. At places it held us in thin air, supported over some hundreds of feet of emptiness on out-hanging props of wood or stone.

"Oasis", I suppose, might be defined as fertility amidst sterility. Normally, it suggests waving palm trees on flat Arabian or African sands. But there seems no reason why it should not also mean clefts of verdure amidst sterile towering wastes of enormous rock. I can think of no better word for the startling, delightful little places, fruitful and green, which the traveller finds strung at intervals of ten miles or so along these arid Karakoram gorges. Functionally, they resemble the Arabian oases, though in an environment vertical rather than horizontal.

As you approach them the amount of visible sky enlarges, the enclosing rock-walls for a while somewhat withdraw. Along the barren valley-flanks, far above road-level but looking themselves like roads, stretch two or more curious straight lines from which small green smears may descend. These lines can be traced running steadily into the distance, perhaps almost to the ultimate point ahead where the valley narrows into a gorge again and bends away. Visits to Chitral in 1948 and 1951 had familiarized me with this spectacle: the lines are the characteristic irrigation-channels of mountainous Central Asia, the counterpart of the Arabian desert well, the source of the oases' fertility.

Much ingenuity and labour go to their making. They take off from snow-fed side-streams, maybe a day's march above the rare little patches of flat or terraced soil which they are destined to water. They then run almost level along the rocky flanks of the valley, with much sideways winding and various accidental green leakages, seeming because the valley-floor descends to creep further and further up the flanks, until they reach the points chosen for descending in cascades to the fields.

We approached one such oasis now, Nomal, the destination of the cook's child. It was comparatively big, straggling beside two miles or so of river, with a subsidiary hamlet on the far bank, connected by a swaying aerial bridge. Excited at home-coming, the child explained the local sights, among them the polo-ground. Polo originated in Central Asia, so the villagers are keen players, usually on narrow oblongs of trodden earth, rimmed by unmor-

tared stone walls where the spectators sit. And today, behind its many stone walls, Nomal's orchards were in blossom; sparrows squabbled; magpies flitted chattering from tree to tree. A brightness of green lay on the young wheatfields. After the huge tawny desolation behind us the place delighted the eye.

Ibrahim, the sturdy youth with fever, said his family lived in the subsidiary village across the swaying bridge. According to the driver, however, a doctor might be found at Chalt, the next oasis; Ibrahim agreed to come. By this time I was thinking I might need doctoring too. Sooner or later the traveller in Delkaria suffers abdominal turmoil, and for weeks I had with happy immunity guzzled much Pakistani food, rather than the English sort which was sometimes available. Now retribution threatened.

Chalt was jeep-head; to the North lay utterly motorless country, far into the remoteness of Chinese Turkestan. On arrival there we found no doctor. The hapless Ibrahim could only be sent back on the homing jeep, with pills and advice which I bestowed. Rahim had been busy organizing our transport onwards: two pack-ponies, with their owners as guides, and a riding-pony which (as in earlier treks) he and I would share.

We were to sleep at an oasis called Mayún. Estimates of its distance conflicted; Gilgiti dialects translate ill into Urdu. The best guess seemed 12 miles. Soon the path rose steeply, huge slopes to our right plunging 1,000 ft. or so to the river. Distrusting a pony in such places, I took to my legs. Rahim thought this a good idea—and mounted. For intestinal reasons I had started lunchless. Strong dust-raising winds swirled about. Though cloud again clothed the great peaks, and the weather was plainly unsettled, the sun here in the torrid valley beat in full afternoon strength on our backs.

The landscape that we crept through, ant-like, became yet more enormous—and more varied. Huge eroded side-valleys poured into the main gorge. We were approaching the country described by Shipton as "the ultimate manifestation of mountain grandeur." [1] The predominant rock-tone remained brown, but there was much diversity of detail: slaty scree-slides; iron-black veins or knuckles; angular outcrops of jade-green, olive, even

[1] "Mountains of Tartary", p. 222

PLATE VI

Girlhood in Central Asia

Right: These three have just been vaccinated; the eldest, Muslim-style, modestly lets her face

Left: Little lady of Hunza, met on the road

violet; soft layers of ochreous yellow or dull brick-red; vast shapeless colourless disasters resembling slag-heaps. The river, if not rushing in some narrow cleft of rock, or pressing frills of baffled foam against the roots of a precipice, sliced through cliff-edged masses of conglomerate or puddingstone, these apparently representing the floor of some former valley which stood at a higher level. Above them might rise slopes so seemingly gentle and mildly rounded as to suggest the Brighton Downs—until quick reckoning showed them to be perhaps 4,000 ft. thick, and scrutiny disclosed the horrid nearness of some abrupt crag or frightful chasm.

The two guides leading the pack-ponies were voluble—in Gilgiti, or perhaps Brusheski, a Hunza language. The uncomprehended incessant chatter at my heels and the flurries of pony-stirred dust became tiresome. I pressed ahead. Rahim, braver and lazier than me, continued to ride, bringing up our cavalcade's rear. The path, four or five feet across, periodically carried itself for some yards on props over vertical abysses. It had ceased climbing; then a devious descent began, sometimes very steep. After a while, around curtains of rock, a new oasis became visible, Mayún I assumed, very welcome, for I was in some distress. Little green plots, grey huts, stone walls, and the deep rich pink of peach-blossom remotely disclosed themselves at a confluence. The place was beautifully sited, mostly on a bluff at the far shore above a fine masonry bridge. Disappointment, however, lay in wait. This pretty spot turned out to be Sikanderabad, of whose existence I had not heard. An unverifiable mileage still parted us from the rest-house.

Again I pressed ahead—but not in solitude. Wayfaring on Central Asian caravan-routes is traditionally companionable, and an Englishman, nowadays a rarity, must reckon on attracting company of a pertinacious sort. Without rudeness for which I had not the heart, it proved impossible to shake off an aged plodder, proud of his Urdu, persistent in questions, one long yellow incisor adorning his naked upper gum. Pouring forth tedious anecdotes about his land, his quarrels with his brother, his children's ailments, he shuffled along, efficiently shod in leprous-looking bandages, the poor man's alternative to the fine boots of pliant leather which some Gilgitis wear. In this country of soft thick dust, Pathan chaplis such as mine were at a disadvantage.

Glancing back, I saw that eventually the precipices had worried even Rahim, had made him pedestrian; he was leading our pony. We reached Mayún at evening in a rotary windstorm. Dust and desiccated horse-dung smote our faces, followed by sprinklings of rain.

The rest-house had no washing-basin. I bathed face and feet in a runnel of glacier-water, glinting with mica-flakes, which coursed through the enclosure. Children, eagerly watching the stranger's antics through the door, were shooed away. There were no charpoys [1]; Rahim spread my bedding and his on the earthen floor of the one guest-room. Nor were there lamps or candles, so we ate hastily before sundown.

The clouds blew away after dark, revealing that we occupied one of the most wonderful positions in the world. Opposite, across the river, a gigantic V-shaped rent in the sombre fore-range exposed the very vitals of the icy 25,550-ft. Rakaposhi massif, bright with moonlight. On the little verandah I gazed at this glory through the twigs of a bare mulberry, which cast thin shadows on the earth. An apple tree in full flower stood nearby, uplifting snowy branches to the majestic crests.

Next morning, through a web of linguistic uncertainty, appeared to emerge the formidable fact of a 24-miles march, our intended destination being Baltit, Hunza's capital. My visceral malaise lingered. The weather was again cloudy, and colder. The change of height from Gilgit had been very evident yesterday from the foliage; walnut trees were leafless, poplars and willows afoam with tenderest young green. Though apricot-blossom was nearly over, some belated petals clung. These were much paler than the peach, and more mauve than pink.

For a while I bestrode the pony—for the good of Rahim's health as of mine. The path wound between little grey stone walls for a while, over boulders and dust. Twice the pony trotted through a buzzing curtain of wild bees, hived in nearby rock-clefts. Then the little walls ceased, and we were out in utterly sterile places again. A steely hawk flashed by. These birds are much sought by the nobles and princelings of the Gilgit Agency and Chitral, falconry being a favourite pastime. Before leaving Gilgit I had seen one in the bazaar, caught the day before, riding

[1] String-beds, ubiquitous in Delkaria

tethered on its captor's wrist. It was unhooded, its eyelids forcibly shut, deftly stitched with fine catgut.

Sometimes huge flapless watchful eagles or vultures drifted by on a level with us, their necks craning for prey in the profound gorge below. Above, red-shanked choughs wheeled and cawed, erupting from eyries as our little cavalcade passed. A few martins skimmed among the boulders; what they found to eat in this arid desolation was a puzzle.

Thousands of feet aloft at the far side, poised on shelves beyond which yet further thousands soared to the glacier-skirts around the mysteriously-veiled summits, could be seen a sprinkling of conifers, or sometimes tiny patches of grassland, and huts, little villages even. Immensely-protracted steep zigzags approached these from below, thin as wires, threadlike, to us almost invisible across the intervening gulfs of air. What places for an escapist, tired of modernity! Ultimate refuge lay up there; so remote and arduous of access that the old or sick, once arrived, might never get down.

During the morning the grey windy sky again flung skiffs of rain. By noon we reached an oasis, Hinji or Hindi. It had a little rest-house, where tea was brewed as we talked to strong young men, sepoys on leave from the Northern and Gilgit Scouts. The chimney in these regions is not thought a necessary architectural device; fires are laid on a central open hearth in the living-room, and the smoke, after draught-blown, eye-stinging efforts, escapes from a square, blackened roof-hole. Hinji, we learned, was the Northernmost limit of the Gilgiti tongue; thereafter would come the zone of the complex little languages of Hunza and Nagar.

The weather now luckily cleared, as we began entry to what Shipton calls "the very heart of the greatest concentration of high mountains in the world", a landscape "difficult to describe . . . without indulging in superlatives." [1] Repeatedly the eye was deceived by the immensity. On rounding a bend in the dry rock-face—on my legs, scared anew by the enormous vertical drops beside the path—I was confronted with a darker surface towering up, margined with green moss: a great water-slide. Away at the top waved a white plume of airborne spray; and there some sparrows fluttered, minute because of the glissade's

[1] "Mountains of Tartary", pp. 14 and 15

misleading scale. But no! It was much more shocking: the flutterings, the characteristic wing-beats were pigeons', not sparrows'. What had seemed about 200 feet of dark water-draped rock was at least 600.

Two caravan-routes crept through the gorge. They had been partners, mutually glimpsed most of the way up. Ours, the Westerly, Hunza-bound, was the steeper. The other, on the river's Easterly bank, served the rival principality of Nagar; it had taken off early yesterday by the masonry bridge below at Sikanderabad. And here, in the grimmest sector, traffic on each became just visible again from its opposite, across the huge intermediate emptiness. Journeying steadily at about our speed on the Nagar route was a picturesque object, but almost infinitely small, like the exceptional kind of insect that needs observing under a microscope: an elegantly high-stepping black horse, upon which, in front, rode a lady in a white burqa, and behind, his arms possessively around her holding the reins, a man in flowing buff Gilgiti cloak. They disappeared round bends or obscuring walls of rock, reappeared, keeping pace with us; and at each fresh glance, on their emergence as if miniatures from a painted Persian tray, they emphasized anew, by their absurd tininess, the landscape's breath-taking size.

Yesterday afternoon, through physical distress, had dully penetrated to me a sound that puzzled, that seemed incongruous in these withdrawn places, suggesting modern war: a remote explosion. Now came another, but nearer, readily recognized this time, for I was feeling better—an avalanche, somewhere among the great peaks! These portentous grey presences could be half-seen again. The afternoon air-clearance was stripping shawls from their shoulders, exposing the snow-surfaces to strong, thawing April sunshine.

When in the worst of the gorge, poised on an out-propped 4-ft.-wide path over a 2,000-ft. precipice dropping sheer to the river—which precipice, however, was dwarfed into triviality by the immensely bigger ones opposite, in front, and above—I had supposed the limit of scenic astonishment had been reached. I did not know what awaited us a few miles ahead, as we crested the last rise at Murtazabad and looked into the vale of Hunza itself.

Here was astonishment utterly different in kind, which whetted

PLATE 21. In Hunza: a side valley, after emerging from the gorge near Murtazabad. The immense scale can be gauged from the terraced fields

Chapter 16

TWO PRINCIPALITIES

HUNZA and Nagar have much in common—but are much divided. They share the same beautiful valley; but the strong, shining, almost bridgeless river, slicing it deeply like a sword, holds them apart. They share the same Faith, Islam; but are of contrary sects, respectively Ismailis and Shias, as estranged, perhaps, as Congregationalists and Catholics.

Voices across the water, shouts and cries from distant Nagar villages, drifted faintly on the air as I sat, that April evening, by the pleasant Aliabad rest-house in Hunza territory; all along the far side of the valley scores of festival fires glowed red, waxing and waning with shifts of the wind. But precisely what event in the Shias' religious calendar the fires commemorated, whether the voices were raised mainly in prayer or in merrymaking, seemed of little interest to Hunzawals. Replies to my queries were vague.

"Today perhaps is the birthday of one of their Imams",[1] said the rest-house keeper indifferently. "They make much noise."

Because Hunza stands on one of Central Asia's main caravan-routes it is—for so remote and lonely a place—fairly well known. Until the startling political changes of recent years—the stoppages of movement first southward to Srinagar, then northward to Kashgar, owing to the Indo-Pakistani dispute and the Chinese Communists' restrictive policies—such travellers as there were between the Indian plains and Sinkiang[2] all came this way: officials to man the Kashgar Consulates, merchants of diverse Asian races, explorers from the West. In summer, when the snow had largely melted on the succession of high passes—Tragbal, Kamri or Burzil, Mintaka or Kilik—a sparse but quite busy traffic flowed along this track.

Nagar, by contrast, lies up a side-ravine, and is therefore seldom visited. Nagarwals told me, when I was in their country

[1] Religious leaders, saints
[2] Chinese Turkestan

after leaving Hunza, that they had seen no Englishman since before the British Raj ended, nearly five years previously. Understandably they sometimes feel jealous of the foreign attention so easily got by Hunza. My visit was balm to hurt local pride. There was further satisfaction about their weather, which happened to be cloudless throughout my stay, perfect for photography—which it had not been in Hunza.

For Hunza, which faces South-East, is generally the sunnier. Nagar, opposite, must be a dismal place in winter. Between October and March it gets practically no light except what is vexingly reflected from its rival's territory; the huge mountain-mass behind it blocks the low sun's direct rays. And this secondary, negative role shows also, curiously enough, in its history. Hunza has in general been the expansionist, energetic principality; Nagar the unhappy victim of its neighbour's raids. Its soil is the more fertile; agriculture being easier, its people have perhaps tended to be somewhat the softer and more sedentary.

But these are relative terms. In fact the inhabitants of both territories are renowned for hardihood. The Hunzawals' additional reputation for ferocity is moreover I think misleading, out of character. It was acquired when an ambitious former Mir caused them to attack their neighbours to North and West and South, which they did with vigorous loyalty. Hunza thereby became a word of terror throughout much of high Central Asia—but perhaps without their really desiring this. Though bodily so tough, they seemed to me temperamentally gentle people, different in nature for example from Pathans who, despite great charm, are true marauders. Crime in modern Hunza is almost non-existent; the administration largely runs itself.

Mahboob, the young Aliabad postmaster with out-hanging green shirt, escorted me very amiably over the last lap to Baltit and Karimabad.

"You find pleasure to travel, Sir?"

I admitted it.

"Though you are Englishman, Sir, perhaps, even, you have seen New York?"

I agreed.

He sighed with envy. American prestige nowadays is high. "I poor man, Sir. I wish much to travel, to make big journey, see

many places. Inshallah,[1] one time I will. Heretofore, I not go more far than Gilgit."

"But you speak English quite well. I should have said you'd studied in 'Pindi or Lahore. Where did you learn it?"

"Here, Sir, in Hunza. I get books."

It was for me to feel envy. "That isn't at all an easy method—not having anyone to talk to. I suppose you haven't picked up other languages this way?"

"Yes, of course, Sir. Persian, and some Pashtu. I speak them more better than English, I think; and of course Gilgiti and Urdu." He turned, making a few remarks in Pashtu to Rahim, then added others in Urdu for me. "Moreover, Sir, we have little languages in Hunza, many. A Colonel Sahib, an Englishman, came to learn one, here in Aliabad. He made book. Perhaps you not know their names—Brusheski, others."

"How many of those do you speak, then?"

"Three, Sir. Of course I know them from child."

The old palace at Baltit, magnificently sited, stood to our left. It seemed a pity that the Mir had discontinued using it. We curved away, towards modernity on a lower elevation at Karimabad.

WEL COME, hospitably announced some lettering painted on a wooden archway, as we entered the grassy enclosure; and a personage smilingly advanced to receive us, wearing Jinnah cap,[2] well-cut coat, and white baggy trousers of cotton, explaining that he was the Mir's brother, and the State Secretary. His two upper central incisors were of gold.

I was conducted up an unrailed outer stairway to the second floor. Within, Ghazi-i-Millat Colonel Mir Mohammad Jemal Khan, Mir of Hunza, awaited his guest. It was pleasant to see him again. A handsome, somewhat heavily-built man, still young, he wore a suit of superb Hunza pattu, probably the best tweed in the world, a big-patterned black-and-white check waistcoat, a lumberjack shirt of red, a large amethyst ring, and a gold wrist-watch heavily bracelcted.

With embarrassment, for hospitality in Asia means much more than in Europe—the contrast often makes sensitive Westerners ashamed—he and his brother explained that there had regrettably

[1] God willing

[2] An astrakhan cap of distinctive shape, the emblem of Pakistani nationalism

been misunderstanding about my arrival-date. Consequently other guests, who had come first, were occupying the main guest-rooms in the palace itself. It was so very unfortunate! The palace was not big, as I could see. They had no choice, therefore, but to instal me in an adjacent, older building. Unhappily the furnishings were not yet in European style; but it was hoped that I would not be very incommoded. At the slightest difficulty, I would please let the Mir's brother know, when everything possible to meet Western tastes would be done.

It says little, I think, for the usual manners of the British, during many decades of rule, that kindly hosts in remoter Asia should still offer apologies such as this with sincerity, indeed anxiety. They are puzzled if a Westerner, when in their country, shows readiness to try Asian ways. That he may truly not want food or furnishings to be altered for his sake, that attempts at it may spoil his pleasure, is hard to believe. Perhaps he is pretending this from some freakish politeness, in an effort to spare them bother? In that case, how exceptionally considerate a man! And courtesy of course requires, more than ever, that the effort be gently overborne.

Even in Swat, perhaps the most sophisticated of the principalities in hilly North-West Pakistan, I had met this puzzle when a guest in 1946 of Shahzada Jehanzeb, then the Waliahad, now the Wali or Ruler. Swat being a Pathan State, I hoped for Pathan food, being aware, from experience elsewhere, how very good it can be; and this was an aristocratic household, capable of cooking it superlatively well. None appeared however. On a later visit, when I knew him and his fine young son Aurangzeb[1] better, I ventured to put in a plea for it. Perhaps, I said, they did not always take Western-style meals when alone? Might we have a real Pathan meal one day? I would love it.

Jehanzeb seemed shocked at first; his handsome forehead puckered in perplexity over my peculiar case. "But it's usual for Englishmen to want English food", he expostulated. "We always arrange it. I think my cook makes it quite well?"

The rooms assigned to me at Hunza in the back premises of the

[1] Now in the Pakistani Army; recently on the C.-in-C.'s staff. Aurangzeb's famous grandfather, who was Wali for many years and virtual creator of Swat State, relinquished power in 1950 to Jehanzeb and withdrew into religious seclusion.

Karimabad palace were full of character. Many overlapping rugs covered the floor in warm colours. And all around the sitting-room walls, as a wainscoting or dado waist high, were strips of Kashgari carpet of fine quality, about 40 feet of it, mainly in red, forming a single design. Originally this must have been for guests to loll against, when sitting cushioned on the floor in the days before chairs came into use. Fine vases showing Chinese influence stood on the mantelpiece, doubtless brought from Singkiang, and a red lacquer tray, on which gold-painted little figures played energetic polo. Above the rich wainscoting the walls carried photographs of past Mirs and their relatives, faded with age, and an oleograph of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth when Duke and Duchess of York. The bed, in the next room, was a huge charpoy,[1] on which, awaiting me, lay spread a sumptuous rezai or quilt of red-and-gold antique material, stiff with metal thread.

After dinner, in the upper room at the palace, the Mir discoursed interestingly on Central Asian affairs, past and present. Hunza, since the severance of her links with Srinagar and Kashgar, had been virtually besieged. They were not wholly cut off, of course, and rejoiced to be part of Pakistan, a Muslim State. The air-route from 'Pindi to Gilgit helped, as did or would the new fair-weather jeep-tracks, present and to come. But conditions were peculiar, undeniably; since the winter of 1950–51 they had felt rather as if living on an island. And Communist-held Singkiang was very near.

I might not know that Hunza's relations with Singkiang had usually been closer than with Kashmir; the main channels of trade flowed that way. True, he and his recent ancestors, as Mirs of Hunza, had been politically within Britain's Indian Empire, and in loose allegiance to the Kashmir Durbar. But they tended historically to look northward. He himself was the titular holder of a large jagir[2] in Yarkand. Nearly all Hunza's rice, until two winters ago, used to come from Kashgar. And in the old days, raiders from Hunza had more often harassed Singkiang than vice versa. Tribute had been paid both ways, but predominantly to Hunza, not from it. Until 1935 or thereabouts, formal visits of Chinese soldiery bearing ceremonial gifts to Hunza from the Singkiang authorities were made yearly. Would I like to see

[1] String-bed
[2] Feudal estate

photographs of this? Yes indeed, I said; and he had them brought out.

Such meagre reports as had been reaching him from over the Northern passes since the Communists' arrival were unpleasant. Political shootings in batches of about 100 took place every Thursday, it was said. The older generation and the better families were apparently being exterminated. Soon perhaps there would only be young people left, ignorant of Islam, nurtured on nothing but Communist doctrines.

How strong the Communists really were was hard to make out. Hunzawals in any case would never be afraid of Chinese. Nonetheless there was obviously some danger of Communism infiltrating southward—particularly, he thought, into Indian-held Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah's Administration in Srinagar was supposed to contain sympathizers. But the graver risk seemed not so much to the Vale of Kashmir itself as to Ladakh.[1] There the people were Buddhist, akin to those of Tibet, now under Communist domination; and they were already evidently fretting against Sheikh Abdullah's control from Srinagar. Ladakh moreover formed a sort of salient; it had Communism on two sides—to East as well as North.

Here in the Gilgit Agency he considered the position geographically more secure; besides, there was the strength of Islam to rely upon, and Pakistani backing. But up in Hunza, at any rate, as in some of the more publicized countries of Europe, they could not help being conscious that a mysterious iron curtain was their near neighbour.

Cultural affinity between Hunza and Singkiang was shown in such things as handicrafts. Perhaps I had noticed his carpets and vases? Hunzawals preferred goods from Kashgar; the influence of Srinagar had been small. The same was true of food. That partaken of by wealthier families in Hunza was more Kashgari than Kashmiri. Many Chinese dishes were enjoyed; the famous meat dumplings known as mun-to, for instance. Was I by any chance interested in Eastern cooking? I acknowledged it. Then he would have a real Kashgari meal prepared before I left.

He did, and very palatable it proved.

It was April 10, another grey day, almost windless. I sat writing

[1] The sparsely-populated North-Eastern tract of Kashmir principality

at Karimabad in my much-carpeted room, when sudden hubbub arose outside: confused shouts, above a dull roaring sound. Looking out, I saw emerging from the enormous cloud-topped gully behind the Baltit palace what seemed to be a fierce little gyrating dust-storm. Whirling particles filled the air.

Soon the branches outside my room were thrashing, bending, almost scraping the ground. Baltit momentarily had vanished in the obscurity. And with astonishment I observed small feather-like white objects flying by. At the same moment the draught which was rushing through the room struck suddenly cold.

Then I remembered. Some while before I had been half-conscious of a remote crash. It had been an avalanche, up amidst the shrouded peaks above that huge gully. And what I was witnessing was no dust-storm, but a mass of avalanche-displaced air, thrust violently down and through the gully, bearing with it little whizzing pellets of snow and ice.

Everywhere in Hunza were friendly greetings. The impression brought back from strolls in the villages was of gentleness and laughter, and of genuine pleasure, besides a natural lively interest in a stranger's arrival. The children in particular were enchanting: well-mannered, eager, beautiful, gay.

A swarm of them rushed out from the polo-ground to see me, as I passed through Baltit on my way to explore the old palace. They had been skirmishing on its grey dusty length, pretending to be either players or ponies, some brandishing sticks forwards, others holding them behind, imitating the animals' tails. And up the slope they accompanied me, asking excited questions, imparting discrepant information and advice.

There can be few grander sites than that on which the little whitewashed Baltit palace perches. And it is itself architecturally effective, if only because of the great wooden bay-windows, out-propped from the upper storey on enormous logs stretching to the ground.

Within, a dark stair ascended to a series of small antique rooms, their walls hung with shields and swords. The main chambers were then reached. An inner one was lit dimly from the ceiling through the big square smoke-vent, beneath which, on the centre of the floor, was an open fireplace, surrounded by a forest of carved wooden pillars.

PLATE VII. The descent-route from Baltit to the Hunza River — seen as a horizontal streak

Mural decorations in the other main chamber, which one of the great bay windows lighted, were various. Several depicted H.H. the Aga Khan, head of the Ismaili sect, with members of his family in religious settings—which Rahim, a Sunni,[1] eyed with austere disapproval. Then, unexpectedly, came an illustration of the Christian Nativity, followed by a large colour-print of Queen Victoria, which turned out on scrutiny to be a calendar of the year 1899 inscribed "Mellin's Food, for Infants and Invalids, Untouched by Hand." An important photograph on one wall portrayed the ceremonial conferment of ruling powers on the Mir's father, who in his formal robes appeared a rather pathetic figure, standing stiffly beside the British Resident of those days, a large, white-uniformed, be-sworded personage in a swaggering attitude. Other photographs, fainter, displayed British officials now unremembered.

The vast panorama as we looked forth from the bay window had as its southern limit the soaring, icy, 25,500-ft. mass of Rakaposhi, about 20 miles distant by direct flight, its summit cloud-hidden, but most of its mighty ribs and glaciers now revealed. Other great nameless peaks, half-veiled, impended to right and left. And below, falling in abrupt terraces to the river, was the green of young wheat—and the apricot-blossom, in amazing seasonal profusion, sprinkled like pale mauve sugar over the entire fertile countryside.

Since arrival I had learned something of the apricot's role in the village economy. It is a remarkable one, throughout all the area between about 7,000 and 9,000 ft. watered by the rivers Hunza, Gilgit and Shyok, tributaries of the Indus. Other fruit trees grow—apples, pears, peaches, cherries, mulberries—but planted in the normal way. Apricots, however, you plant almost as you would potatoes; they are a main crop, and for reasons of climate and soil grow to perfection, yielding abundantly. This explains the extraordinary scenic effects created.

They have many uses. In summer you simply enjoy the ripe flesh of the fruit. At other times you eat this dried—and very good it can be. But more important is the kernel. This you crack between the teeth like a rather hard almond, or eat after it has been ground up as flour and made into cakes or country bread.

[1] The biggest Muslim sect. To them, depictions of the human form verge upon the idolatrous

These are very good too; in the Mir's household we ate them daily. From it a valuable oil is also taken. Experts say that the kernel is exceptionally nutritious. It is also, as I can testify, handy to travel with. Being tough and smooth of surface, it does not readily break or get dirty; you just take a pocketful and set off. Later, in parts of Nagar State, I subsisted happily for a while on nothing but apricot-kernels and some raisins.

This special factor in the local diet, and perhaps something in the water, may explain the people's good health and longevity. These are famous. Descending that evening from the Baltit palace I was introduced to a vigorous greybeard, brisk of step and firm of handclasp, who, judging from his replies to questions about events in the history of Kashmir State, must have been 97—as was claimed. He looked no more than 65. The endurance of the young Hunzawals (and Nagarwals) on mountain expeditions is said to be astounding. Shipton has gone so far as to say they are "far superior as cragsmen" to the much better known Sherpas of Nepal.[1]

The Mir had been worried.

"I do wish those clouds would go away", he exclaimed two days before my departure, regarding the shrouded mountain-tops with a frown. We were on the terrace beside the Karimabad palace. "The people are beginning to say it's my fault; we *must* have some sunshine to water the crops."

For a moment I felt dazed; sunshine to water the crops? I was aware that the more credulous among the Hunzawals think he has some mysterious connection with the weather; that in January there is a ceremonial spring sowing, when he mixes gold-dust with the seed planted in a particular field. Then the explanation dawned.

"You mean that Pandit Nehru hasn't sent any bombers over these last few afternoons?"

He smiled. It was a little joke between us. Soon after my visit began, startled one day by the crash of avalanches, I had amused him by remarking that the Kashmir war seemed to have begun again, and asking where he kept his air-raid shelter.

He nodded and smiled. "Yes. Let's hope he sends lots to-morrow!"

[1] "The Geographical Magazine", August 1952

And so it was. Under a now cloudless sky of wonderful blue, on the afternoon before I left for Nagar, a succession of exceptionally heavy detonations resounded from the icy summits.

The worrying succession of grey days at last was over. If cloudy weather comes to Hunza in spring—as during most of my stay—it may mean dangerous drought. Sunshine, on the other hand, means melting snow and stupendous avalanches, which of course mean rushing hillside torrents—and in the valley below the satisfying tinkle of irrigation-channels, brimful, flowing happily through the wheatfields and among the blossoming apricots.

Chapter 17

ON THE NAGAR SIDE

FOR two-thirds of the way from Hunza to Nagar ponies could not be used; the slopes were too steep, the bridges too shaky. Porters therefore strapped our luggage on their shoulders: my two suitcases, Rahim's one, our two bedding-rolls, a brief-case for films and papers. Local etiquette required that these men should be engaged in relays: one trio, Hunzawals, would come with us to the boundary, where an awaiting Nagarwal trio would take over.

From Karimabad the ground fell away in a series of sudden tawny cliffs and gentle verdant slopes to the brown Hunza river, wriggling in its narrow bed about 2,000 ft. below. It was a brilliant day, blue and gold. From one of the cliff-tops, looking back, we found that what had hidden itself during nearly all our stay, the entire mountain-structure behind 8,000-ft. Baltit, now stood cloudlessly disclosed: a tremendous, indeed appalling succession of ice-falls and stark rock-precipices, towering to 24,000 ft. or more. From the East—our destination—strong morning sunshine beat upon it. Shipton's vivid epithets for the scenery in these bizarre little principalities had certainly not exaggerated. The spectacle so gigantically displayed was stupefying.

The Hunza river, even at this height, and many hundreds of miles from its exit as part of the Indus into the Arabian Sea, was a formidable mass of swift turbid water, bloated by melting glaciers. We approached; the gusty air above its bed, trapped, burnt-up by fierce sunshine, smote the face glove-like with sudden warmth. And stretching across its wide expanse, trembling from the gusts or the heavy percussions from the stream, was not so much a suspension-bridge as the rotting skeleton of one, its upholding wire ropes all frayed, its hand-rail somehow gone, many transverse planks missing from the gangway that formed our crossing.

As I negotiated these emptinesses—my eye momentarily drawn, fascinated, to the rapid frothy whirls deep below—

PLATE VIII

Right: Schoolboy of Baltit: cheerful, self-confident, dignified

Left: Ghulam Rasul, porter of Nagar, whose personality and strength dominated us all

Rahim's elephantine movements behind me, or those of the laden porters, falling out of step with mine, set the whole creaky contraption swaying. Heart in mouth I reached the far shore, Nagar territory. There the Hunza porters unloaded—and I forthwith found myself taken charge of by Ghulam Rasul, which means Servant of the Prophet.

A youth of striking beauty, he shouldered my 65-lb. suitcase as if it had been but a shawl, and having introduced himself—making clear that he was not merely porter but guide and protector—he led us off up a slope at a pace which soon left me, though in fair condition, breathless.

For the next few hours Rahim and I and the two other porters, older men, were dominated by Ghulam's force of personality and great physical strength. So, too, before long, was the jemadar of the Mir of Nagar, an important local functionary who, on instructions, awaited us in the next ravine with news: that the Mir unfortunately was away for a short while from Nagar, and would be absent when I arrived.

Here, at this point in our march, a seething little tributary that descended from the Hispar glacier had to be crossed. The bridge consisted of no more than pairs of peeled round logs roped longitudinally together, and propped on intermediate boulders. There was no hand-hold. Wavelets agitated by the swollen current sporadically slapped over it. Though immersion would have been nasty, the transit was in fact much less serious than that over the Hunza river; but as we picked our way over, the jemadar, solicitous for the Mir's British visitor, the first such being to set foot on Nagar soil for years, and no doubt misinterpreting my movements, suddenly in excess of zeal seized me supportingly from behind—and we both nearly fell in.

Like a flash Ghulam Rasul, who had been glancing round, gripped our reeling interlocked forms, and somehow, though himself burdened with the suitcase, rebalanced us, pouring forth upon the jemadar, much his senior in years and status, a torrent of harsh reprimand. Abashed, the unfortunate man trudged up the ensuing slope in meek silence.

Having us all now completely in subjection, Ghulam could afford to relax. He abandoned his commanding manner, and proved a gay companion as he led us distressingly fast up a long

stiff zigzag to the first big Nagar village. He even, unrebuked, poked fun at Rahim, accusing him of being fat. From behind, he presented a curious sight: a sprig of freshly-picked apple-blossom graced his white Gilgiti cap, a young man's salute to spring, which bobbed as he marched; and on his ill-clad back, bobbing too, as if weightless, rode my heavy suitcase, its labels announcing to the empty Asian skies "Southern Railway to Victoria" and "Quebec via Canadian Pacific."

Ascending, he plied me with questions, which I had not the breath to answer well. Many facts were required: my age and income, my matrimonial status and the purpose of my visit, where I would go next and why, what wages I gave Rahim, how long he had been with me and what for.

And what did I think of the Hunzawals? Yes, they were healthy and strong of course, and brave it was said; good people probably. But what a pity about their beliefs! To be Ismailis was really absurd. Why, on the walls of their mosques—sometimes even the West wall, mind you, the wall facing Mecca—they put up pictures of their Imam.[1] It was almost idol-worship .

A quick thinker, Ghulam Rasul before we reached the top had made up his mind. For his purposes I was a good thing; and as I panted after him up the last pebble-strewn gully, he was ordering me to take him forthwith into my employment. Those ships of the sky that had been reaching Gilgit attracted him; he desired to get in one, and come with me to England.

True to its secondary, negative role, Nagar is scenically less grand than Hunza. The great peaks fail to compose so well; many of them, in what is a more crowded, narrower landscape, are wholly or in part shut off by insignificant nearer ones. Only at the two valley-ends, westward behind us to Hunza, and eastward to the Kanjut massif near the Hispar glacier, do they show themselves in full—but diminished by distance.

We now entered an arid tract. In England the sun is a friend. In Asia that is not so, at any rate for travellers after the spring equinox—a fact which, in this sort of terrain and beneath these now cloudless April skies, I began vividly to reappreciate. Heat and glare beat ferociously back from the bare rock; I soon got a thirst; on my skin, where sweat had dried, tiny salt-grains could

[1] i.e. H.H. The Aga Khan

be felt. In any daylight expeditions made throughout the rest of my Pakistani journey, dazzle and desiccation would be big causes of fatigue.

The last lap to Nagar was along a level stretch, beneath which wheatfields in terraces descended steeply under a foam of pale apricot-blossom to the Hispar tributary. Here pony-travel became possible again; and on the Mir's hospitable instructions two pack-animals and one of his own riding-ponies, with attendants, awaited us under a tree. Baggage was transferred, and friendly farewells said.

As if however to emphasize our folly in quitting Ghulam Rasul's firm charge, a minor catastrophe befell us after only a few hundred yards—how, I never knew, for I was walking ahead. I heard cries, stampeding hooves; and forthwith the two pack-ponies, unattended, wildly out of control, shot round the bend just behind me, their loads bulging over the narrow track's verge. Things began to drop off as they dashed past, eluding me. I saw my briefcase go; then, as they disappeared in a flurry of dust, Rahim's bedding-roll bounded down the khud.[1]

We reached Nagar in humiliating shape. One of the ponies had not been retrieved and had arrived there gasping an hour or so before us, causing perplexity. The Mir's handsome riding-steed was in consequence hung about with dusty kit laboriously recovered from below; and on its back wobbled my larger suitcase, Ghulam Rasul's former burden, now embarrassingly extruding garments from one splintered end—which was to prove past repair, and an annoyance, all the way back to 'Pindi.

The Nagar palace stands on a little eminence. Seen in the strong slanting light of an April evening, as we approached up the curve from the polo-ground, it displayed itself well. Pale vertical trunks of many surrounding poplar trees, still leafless, gave added dignity, and an enchanting cascade of apricot-blossom spilt all around it down the grassy slopes.

It lacked Baltit's grandeur; but I thought it perhaps more effectively sited than the Karimabad palace. Like them, it is small.

[1] Roadside slope, cliff, or precipice. A convenient Himalayan term. Roads or tracks in Asia wind along the mountain-flanks oftener than in Europe, using the valley-floors less, because so many of the latter are practically worthless for transport, being V-shaped and narrow, if not actually gorges

Though the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar are politically important, they have no great wealth. Many of the ordinary khans [1] of the fertile Peshawar plains must be much richer.

The Mir being away, my immediate host was his heir the Waliahad, aged eight. Physically perhaps not very prepossessing —though he might grow into a handsome man—he delighted and astonished me by his fine manners. Clutching a bodyguard by the hand, as he negotiated the high irregular steps of the palace stairway one at a time, he led me that evening into dinner with courteous assurance. Then he had himself lifted into a big chair at the table-head, and engaged me, during our meal, in polite enquiries and exchanges of compliments, as if long trained to hospitality. By so little a boy, in so remote, unvisited a part of the world, it was a remarkable performance.

Of his two bodyguards, one was chestnut-haired, that phrase including a proudly-horned moustache, much waxed. Both these men had pale, almost milky skins.

Many Westerners suppose that Delkarians must all in varying degrees be black haired, black or brown eyed, dark or olive complexioned. At any rate in the subcontinent's North-Western corner, this is not true. In Chitral, in 1948, I enquired about a groom employed by a Scouts' officer. His corn-yellow hair and bird's-egg-blue eyes suggested a native of Aberdeen or Trondhjem; yet I was assured he was a true Chitrali. Many Pathans, too, could be taken for Europeans, or vice versa. An influential Mahsud chief whom I met in Waziristan not long after leaving Nagar, Malik Hayat, still rejoices in his famous flame-red hair and green eyes—though both in fact are somewhat faded with the years. His elder son had hair of an East Anglian gold. I photographed this young man in 1951, when he was serving as a police officer in Karachi.

Nor need the redheads be hillmen. One of Pakistan's crack fighter-pilots, of an aristocratic Punjabi family, F.-Lt. Mohsin Hayat, a member of Zaffar Chaudhury's Fury Squadron at Peshawar which flew me in April 1951, has curly hair of a Titian auburn.

On the other side of the frontier there are sometimes red-bearded Sikhs—and very handsome they can be—for Sikhs,

[1] Local landholders, or big farmers, mostly former tribal headmen

h IX
Seen across bil-
apricot blossom:
Mir of Nagar's
alace

Left: Nagar: a tinkling snow-fed channel flows beneath the poplar-boles and spring flowers

whose religion prohibits them from cutting their hair, are a people adept, in any event, at bold use of colour. One, a friend of mine, a major in the Indian Army, is a refreshment to the eye, whether in uniform or not. And I remember a hot morning in 1948 when, beside the temple at Tarn Tarn in the Majha area of East Punjab, which breeds giants, I met a 16-stone Sikh peasant lad said to be a wrestler, all bone and muscle, at his toilet. He was almost stripped, wearing nothing but his cotton kachha [1]; and he had his turban off. Above a little downy red beard he stared at me with cat-green eyes; and as he stared he combed his much-oiled tresses, thick and long and flaming red, which hung far below his great wrestler's breasts—a truly terrific spectacle.

While in Nagar I began to feel anxious again about my proposed trip to Indian-held Kashmir. Would my application succeed? I could get it finalized, I knew, only in person at 'Pindi, after U.N. Headquarters there had obtained Delhi's formal consent to my crossing the cease-fire line, and had co-ordinated this locally with the Pakistani military authorities. Perhaps, by now, the much-wished-for Indian message had arrived—or further doubts and queries had been raised, needing urgent clarification.

Return to the plains from this remoteness of the Karakoram could be organized to no fixed programme. Further minor catastrophes, to ponies or health, might await Rahim and me on the unknown track between Nagar and Chalt, down the Eastern flank of the great gorge. And, once back in Gilgit, there was no certainty about an airlift to 'Pindi. Plane schedules were erratic. Or I might be off-loaded, for I possessed no high priority. Or again storms might stop departure. I had heard how the Pakistani C.-in-C., and the Foreign Secretary, had been stuck idly for days in Gilgit, their busy tour-programmes much deranged, because the weather made flying on this grim mountain route impossible.

So, on another April morning of brilliant sunshine, Rahim and I, with two guides, and three ponies loaded with kit, reluctantly set forth from the Nagar palace on our journey back; past the outer audience hall, an amusing miniature on the Moghul model, its roof-edges symmetrically planted with the horns of

[1] Very short shorts; a distinctive Sikh undergarment

markhor[1]; past the pale-stemmed poplars; past the profuse apricot-blossom which cascaded down the slopes.

The little Waliahad, standing in the inner courtyard between his sturdy bodyguards, had graciously waved me goodbye.

Islam, under various modernistic impacts, is said to be a religion in decline. No doubt this verdict contains truth—more, perhaps, than it nowadays would of Christianity, which suffered the impacts earlier, had its prestige then in part upheld by the Western nations' material strength, and during the last decade or so has shown some spiritual recuperative power.

Nevertheless, in the remoter rural parts of Pakistan at any rate, evidence of decline is not conspicuous. On the contrary, were deductions drawn from such visible symptoms as the building of mosques and imambaras,[2] Islam might be accounted vigorous.

I saw several such new structures up in Hunza and Nagar—as in some earlier stages of my journey. There was one today, in the second village on our route back to the plains. Throughout what used to be Kashmir State, however, Muslim religious buildings tend to lack distinctive adjuncts such as the dome and the minar, and to the untrained eye may scarcely be recognizable. This one, superficially, was just a small, square, stone-built, flat-roofed house, surmounted by a wooden lantern.

Tombs, too, were of unfamiliar shape. In the Pathan country they are usually oblong heaps of stones, covering an area bigger than the corpse, as if a giant lay beneath, and sometimes dignified with headstones and footstones. Here and in Hunza they were tiny walled courtyards, the four-tiered corners stepped up higher than the rest. This has been a novelty to Rahim—as to me; he regarded it askance, with Sunni disfavour.

Having emerged from the side-nullah, we now went along on the other, Eastern flank of the Hunza river, traversing the country where, from Aliabad on our first night in Hunza territory, I had seen the Nagarwals' unexplained festival fires so picturesquely aglow. It was a well-irrigated strip, very fertile; villages were many. Above, to right and left, rose several great peaks of

[1] A rare Himalayan wild goat, rather like an ibex, but with spirally-twisted horns; much sought by sportsmen

[2] Shia prayer-places

24,000 ft. or so; and ahead to the South, growing ever bigger and more beautiful as we progressed and the sky's blue deepened towards noonday, stood the gigantic glistening whiteness of Rakaposhi. Travelling on this side of the Hunza river we would creep below it much closer than on the journey in. Seen endwise, as now, the lovely summit showed itself to be narrow, almost knife-edged; it was not the bulky dome rather resembling Nanda Devi's,[1] such as I had supposed when gazing upon it in moonlight beside the apple-blossom at the Mayún rest-house.

Our destination, after traversing the main sector of the gorge, would tonight be Minapin, opposite Mayún. Unfortunately intestinal commotion began here anew—not, I assured myself, a real dysentery, of which naturally in 21 Delkarian years I had had several, but a mere consequence of greed. However, under glaring sunshine even more ferocious than on the march into Nagar, it sufficed to weaken the perceptions.

Depleted but hale, I set forth zestfully next morning, my eye seldom on the track, head turned continually to the superb new panoramas opened up of Rakaposhi's icy magnitudes. And I achieved that day the longest march of the trip—sustained again mainly by apricot-kernels.

Not long after we had left Minapin, bobbing towards us above the stone walls round a bend could be observed the upper parts of another little cavalcade. I guessed it might be the Mir of Nagar, homeward bound; and so it proved. A lightly-built man, good-looking, only 28, he had been riding fast under the sun, and was hot, wearing a simple Muslim achkan[2] open at the throat, and Jinnah cap.

He dismounted, and for a while we engaged in amiable talk beside the dusty track. Thanking him for the hospitality at the palace, I praised his little son's beautiful manners; and as we conversed, the puzzling fact emerged that he assumed me to be American. Eventually rebutting this, I asked why, for my accent is an ordinary English one.

"But I never imagined I'd have an English visitor!" he ex-

[1] The great peak in U.P., India; height 25,645 ft.

[2] A characteristic garment of Northern Delkaria; a long, close-fitting coat buttoned all the way up, and completed with a stiff cylindrical collar of the same material

claimed—adding: "How very nice; quite like old times! We've had several Americans here, they travel a lot; but not a single Englishman since Pakistan started! I'd begun to fear we'd never see one again."

Purdah is not strongly enforced in the two principalities. In villages such as we were passing through today, the women modestly avert the face from a passing stranger; but they seldom go about veiled or in burqas. On their heads they wear little "pork-pie" caps gaily worked in several colours; their hair hangs in neat plaits. In Hunza as in Nagar I photographed little girls without protest. Perhaps however I was wise not to try the maturer ones.

For Delkaria, living standards are high. There are no beggars; at any rate I saw none. Food and clothing of a simple sort seem enough for all.

"Salaam alaikum!" they say as you enter a village, usually rising to greet you, wanting to shake you by the hand. There is much friendly politeness, very pleasant; sometimes also a curious antique courtesy. A local headman, when we were shaking hands, bent over mine with a deferential air, as if it were a lady's and himself a Continental gallant intending to kiss it.

Though rural dispensaries exist, a pathetic belief prevails, as elsewhere in remoter Asia, in any Westerner's doctoring magic. At Mayún, on the way in, I was pursued by a bearded elder, who with confidence required me to heal his eyes. They were terribly diseased. I could only urge a visit to the hospital at Gilgit, where chances of cure, so far as I could guess, were nil. Here at a hamlet South of Minapin, a wasted-looking man of fine frame besought me to stop his belly-pains; they doubled him up in agony several times a month, he said, and were getting worse.

But occasionally a layman in these far-off places can help. Camping in 1940 near Tragbal, on the journey which eventually took me to the Rupal Nala under Nanga Parbat,[1] I was visited by three Afghan camel-drovers, travelling northward. The youngest could not go on, they explained. He wanted doctoring, so would I do it? His foot was sore.

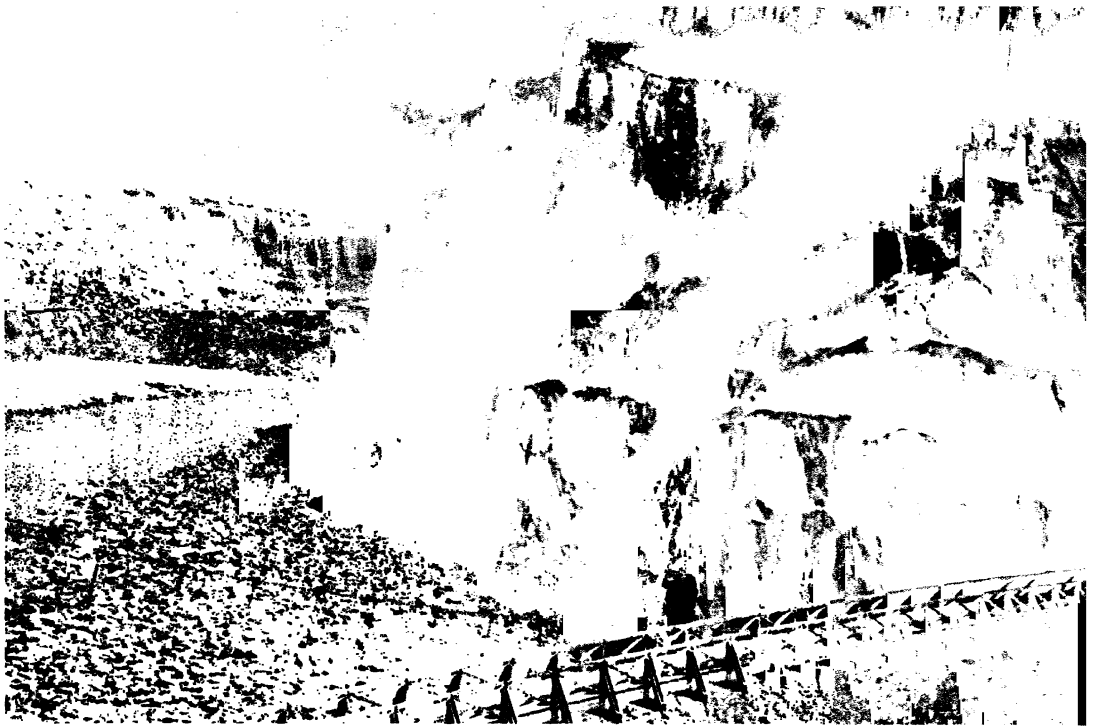
It must have been. Heel and ankle were swollen, angrily red; and on the under walking-surface, through dirt and the sticky

[1] See pp. 82, 83

PLATE 23. Between Nagar and Chalt: the flanks of Rakaposhi, seen from near Minapin

PLATE 24

Sikanderabad from the Hunza side, showing the pony-bridge leading back to Nagar



remains of a poultice, could be seen a greenish suppurative mass, bigger than half-a-crown, imprisoned deep beneath horny callus. He was hot with fever; his pulse raced.

With me were some M. and B. tablets; also elastoplast, iodine, and a penknife. Grasping the knife and stomaching my qualms, I attacked the thick horny skin, prodding and slicing. At last a dense jet of pus shot forth. Gorge rising I glanced away, seeking the Afghan's eyes, anxious to find that the pain had not been very bad.

And I looked into—nothing: a stoical indifference merely; perhaps also faith. His large bare foot had throughout lain in my hand almost immobile, without a wriggle. Nor did I feel him wince during the energetic washing and skin-paring and iodine-sousing which followed.

Those crude feats of hillside surgery worked wonders however. After a day or two the trio moved off. Meeting them later in Gurais, I was greeted with cheerful shouts. The young man had fully recovered, they said—as indeed he seemed to have, grinning down from his ugly swaying steed.

"Come up here behind me", he hospitably urged, making space on the big camel-saddle. "Plenty of room! God made animals for riding on. This walking can't do you good. Why, you'll be getting a sore foot yourself!" Then, as a happy afterthought: "My knife's much bigger and sharper than yours."

The concluding phases of the return to Gilgit down Nagar territory completed themselves pleasantly. From this track on the river's Eastern flank, which climbed less high, the gorges appeared not quite so appalling. Above, under the powerful melting sunshine, avalanches often crashed. Rakaposhi, glimpsed occasionally up narrow black defiles, was magnificently near, dazzling, enormously tall; its ice-falls and hanging glaciers seemed about to hurtle down on us.

Eventually we reached Sikanderabad, on its bluff by the bridge; there the two tracks coalesced. More climbs, fresh gorges and aridity, intervened, and then, at Chalt, Faridullah's jeep awaited us as arranged, to carry us successfully if bumpily home.

But it was not my Gilgiti home at all. It had been transformed; was under occupation now by the U.S.A., that is to say by Captain Paul Jackson, Naval Attaché at the U.S. Embassy at

Karachi, plus his wife and adolescent son. They had turned up by plane as guests the previous day.

Americanism is a powerful, pervasive thing. It poured through Faridullah's house, submerging him, choking out the Pakistani atmosphere. This was not what I had come to Asia for. Mrs Jackson supervised preparation of an American salad for dinner; afterwards she made us "George Washington Instant" coffee. I like Americans, and resent the jealous disparagement which their new-won supremacy evokes. The Jacksons could not have been friendlier, kinder people—and here in Gilgit I could not bear it.

Prospects of escape seemed sombre. What was to be done? A plane had just left. According to Faridullah, there might not be another for days.

Next morning at breakfast-time came the unexpected answer. Macsymowicz had phoned through. He was at the airfield, having brought up an "Orient Skyfreighter" from 'Pindi with a special load. Would I like to fly with him to Skardu, en route back to the plains?

PLATE X

Right: Central Asia is the home of polo: a risk game in progress in Nagar territory

Left: Our returning cavalcade: Rahim and the ponies en route to Minapin

Chapter 18

WINGS OVER BALTISTAN

I HAD never thought seriously of going there, at any rate on this trip. Skardu is about 100 miles East of Gilgit, in Baltistan. Airlifts to it, I had been told in 'Pindi, were probably unobtainable. The people, though Muslim by religion, were racially akin to their Buddhist neighbours further East; Baltistan was therefore very unlike any of the country I had been in. Besides, though the cease-fire line nominally bounded it to the South, there was no possibility of my being allowed to cross in that area towards Srinagar. Distances were huge and military posts rare; officialdom had made very plain that no such expedition could be organized. Politically Baltistan was thus a dead end, an Eastward-stretching tract of Pakistani-held territory without exit, pressed between Communist-controlled Tibet and the remote Buddhist corner of Indian-held Kashmir known as Ladakh.

I felt sorry for Rahim. This might be the roughest flight he had yet made for my sake. What course we would choose on the second hop between Skardu and 'Pindi I did not know; there was no time to look at a map. But it would be highly mountainous anyway. And the first hop, from Gilgit to Skardu, would presumably take us near the extraordinary place where the Indus—which rises in Central Tibet—after having unavailingly probed the main Himalayan range Westward for 500 miles for an exit towards the South and the distant sea, being driven to this by the co-extensive Karakoram range further North, bursts dramatically through, almost doubling upon itself. At this spot, officials had assured me, if enough money could be raised and the men and machines be assembled in such forbidding country, more than sufficient electricity could be generated, by tunnelling through the neck of the loop, to supply the whole of Pakistan.

We packed in haste, bidding Faridullah and the Jacksons rather unceremonious goodbyes. Macsymowicz wanted to start by 10. As we stepped into the plane, which had been standing in the sun little more than an hour, stiflingly warm imprisoned air

struck us. During our short absence in Hunza and Nagar, spring at arid Gilgit had been thoroughly ousted by summer.

There were no other passengers. Rahim had the big cabin to himself; we strapped him in well forward, near the Dakota's centre of gravity, where bumps would be less. I had explained about his ear; Macsymowicz good-heartedly said he would try not to make steep landings.

Off we go now, East into the sunshine, down the course of the blue Gilgit river. Almost at once, from the left, the familiar Hunza river comes in to join it, brown and turbid. I stand behind Macsymowicz in the cockpit. We head towards the Astór valley, down which, from what is now Indian-held territory behind the cease-fire line, I trudged from Tragbal 12 years ago, for those wonderful moments beneath Nanga Parbat.[1]

But this is puzzling. Where can the Indus be, up which we should go? Astór is not on our route. Surely we should swing left? Abruptly we do, round a steep shoulder, and there it lies, a mass of swift precipice-enclosed water, coming in almost behind us, so sharp is the angle. Our leftward swing proceeds. Already we must almost have entered the region of the dramatic break-through. To ordinary eyes it is a landscape altogether appalling, jumbled and rocky and desolate beyond belief, but to electrical engineers presumably a paradise, a place in which to dream of the grandest power-project in Asia.

Macsymowicz waves me into the co-pilot's seat; I change places with his Pakistani colleague. We have reached 7,000 ft., flying almost North-West now, following the great rock-bound river, which ahead can be seen to bend sharply right. Above a tangle of lesser summits Rakaposhi serenely emerges, exposing her bare South-Eastern ribs, the ones opposite to those at which I so recently gazed near Minapin. Sun-heated air rises turbulently from the chasm of the contorted Indus; we bump about in it. This is doubtless partly why Macsymowicz was keen to leave Gilgit early; it will be worse in the afternoon.

At 9,000 ft. we are levelling off. Evidently we shall not fly high on this hop. We swing sharp to the right, swing again, following the river about 4,000 ft. below. A road or track is now just visible down there. Then, but on the further bank, a tiny

[1] Described on pp. 82, 83

patch of green appears amidst the tawny crinkled desolation. I guess it to be Rondu, the only inhabited place of any size all the barren way between the Gilgit river's junction with the Indus behind us and our destination at Skardu.

Macsymowicz confirms this. We unfold the map, peer at it spread on our knees. The air in the cockpit, though we have been up some while, is still stuffy; the sun, high in the clear sky, beats on our heads through the perspex. Outstanding amidst the turmoil of snow-crests to right and left is one of distinctive shape, a 20,000-footer. He calls it the Thumb Peak; pilots on this route, he says, find it a good landmark in dangerous weather. Another, soon after, exposes no rock at all, is all of pure white beautifully-fluted snow, like a scallop-shell.

The river seems much nearer, though we have been flying level, keeping to our 9,000 ft. Why, I ask? Because it is nearer, says Macsymowicz; nearer by about 2,000 ft. This explains its streaky appearance further back, which I had only half-noticed, for there had been so much else to see. It had been tumbling triumphantly down, after its break-through, in a succession of fierce rapids towards the far-off Arabian Sea. As Skardu stands at over 7,000 ft., and Gilgit at between 4,000 and 5,000, the huge Indus must have fallen more than twice the height of the Cotswolds in a few miles. Startling thought!

Macsymowicz points to a snow-ridge we are about to skim over. The last time he flew here, three weeks ago, he had seen fresh footprints of markhor[1] on it. Another time there had apparently been the clumsy pugs of Himalayan brown bear. And once, in an adjacent area, a fellow-pilot had seen a snow-leopard running, very graceful.

The speed of air-travel, especially after you have been grounded for a while, has disadvantages. You may miss things—as I had just now missed the meaning of those white streaks on the river. The eye is not trained for them, fails to catch them. The same sort of failure, though less obvious, may result when you bicycle after a period of having walked, or motor after having bicycled.

But such maladjustment has compensations also. If the structure of the landscape you pass through when in this state happens to undergo some big change, the quality of the change may be

[1] See p. 178, n

intensified; and air-travel intensifies it in extreme degree, making it very dramatic.

This happens in Macsymowicz's Dakota now. In an instant, almost, we are out of the gorge, have left behind the jumbled, anguished region where the great crags jaggedly pressed in beside and above us, and the V-shaped ravines everywhere deeply sliced the earth's surface. We emerge into a worn and weary land of great spaces, a grey sterile land of pebbly windswept plains, on whose rim detached blocks of snow-mountain brood, faint and mysterious with distance.

Here—whatever it may be politically or by religion—is unmistakably Tibet, as I had first glimpsed another area of it years ago: a landscape which, because it lies beyond the mighty barrier of the main Himalayan watershed, strikes the traveller from Delkaria immediately as alien, as altogether different in shape and colour and atmosphere from what he has been in.

At one point only in all its vast length, 1,600 miles, is the mighty barrier decisively broken—here, just behind us, by the Indus in white-streaked commotion as it makes its exit to the South, impelled by the parallel presence further inland of the even mightier but shorter Karakoram barrier. And the passage thus forced is a geographical freak, almost an outrage against nature.[1]

Forthwith, as if to emphasize this, the great river beneath us changes in character, becomes wide and easy-going, sprawling its leisurely coils over the plateau, disintegrating into many shallow channels which part and rejoin. From its meandering course now, it would not be thought capable of cutting a way through tremendous gorges, indeed of decisive action of any sort. Soon a great tranquil blue lake appears; reed-fringed marshes; wide expanses of grey sand-dune; then a romantic small fort of unfamiliar design on a rocky pinnacle by the lakeside, and our Dakota's nose points at a grey airstrip sketchily identifiable on the plateau's Southern margin, flanked to starboard by a wall of bare mountain.

Thoughtful for Rahim, Macsymowicz lowers the aircraft at a

[1] It might be argued that the Sutlej also breaks the barrier; but the Himalaya in that central area consist of two distinct parallel ranges. And the Brahmaputra does not so much break through as work round the barrier's Eastern end

gentler angle than when he put us down at Gilgit some weeks ago. Nevertheless, because of the lessened wing-grip on the thinner air at these altitudes, our approach-speed is fast. Beside the runway, I notice, rests the skeleton of a crashed Bristol Freighter. Just short of the strip, before touch-down, we whizz over some unexpected deep gullys which gape at us alarmingly.

Our halt is brief, sufficient merely to discharge the cargo. Eager hands, strong arms and shoulders attend to this—those of some Pakistani troops who live in tents along the runway, and of lean tattered men of Skardu, long-haired, rather Mongolian of feature, in round skull-caps.

Macsymowicz and a few Pakistani officers, homesick Punjabis, stand gossiping by the aircraft while the unloading proceeds. Some wispy apricot trees still retain wind-harassed relics of pale mauve blossom; the frail petals are raised against a hard blue sky. Even here, at 7,000 ft., the sun-glare amidst the sterile wilderness soon feels fierce, and we shelter beneath the Dakota's wing. Miles away in the distance two dust-devils stalk across the plain, tall columns of rotating particles.

Talk naturally turns to transport-problems. Skardu and the surrounding country, like Hunza and Nagar, has had its normal trade-routes cut both to North and to South by recent political happenings. Nearly everything it needs to import has to come by air, though the new jeep-tracks being built will eventually supplement this. How soon will the snow on the Babusar pass have melted, asks one of the Pakistani officers?

Macsymowicz doesn't know; some time in June, he supposes. There's still thick snow on it now. He could see that from a distance as he came up today. When it does melt, jeep-loads will be able to reach Gilgit direct up the Kaghan valley during three months of the year.

Incidentally, have I yet seen the Kaghan valley, he turns to ask?

"No", I say.

"Why not? I thought all foreign visitors were urged to visit it."

"That's partly why; it made me obstinate. Of course I wouldn't mind going. But it seemed recommended mainly as a tourist place, a sort of second-rate Kashmir."

Macsymowicz grunts—and begins discussing salt, a serious matter in Skardu, for in this arid country there is strong physio-

logical need for it, and the political upset had stopped supplies. He had brought several loads by air. Nevertheless local prices had soared.

"Civilization is spoiling these people", he remarks. "When we first began coming they scarcely understood the meaning of money. They were simple and good. Now they're getting ideas."

Unloading has finished, and we emplane for the final, longer hop to 'Pindi.

Immediately, after becoming airborne, heading towards the gorge, we bank to the right. What for, I wonder? Then it becomes plain that Macsymowicz, kind man, is making a diversion for his two passengers' benefit. Before leaving, we are to see more of Skardu.

We fly back low, parallel with the airstrip; and I now observe, enfolded within the corrugations of dune, villages upon green carpets of cultivation. This plateau is less sterile and empty than it seemed.

We approach the lake. Many frightened water-birds, tiny arrows each dragging a swift wake, ruffle its blue surface as they rise; this no doubt is their breeding season. Now we are over Skardu town, a small place of a single street and square box-shaped houses, grey like the surrounding landscape. The fort displays itself admirably on its pinnacle.

We begin banking the other way, to the left. Columnar as a factory chimney, a dust-devil gyrates before us on the plain, its vertical form marking the steepness of our turn. The Indus re-appears as we head back. Here unenclosed and beneath wide skies, it is not mud-coloured but green. Afternoon turbulence from the vast sun-heated valley-floor buffets us; already the plane's movements are those of a restive horse. Rahim, back in the passenger-compartment, will soon alas be sick.

Flying at 9,000 ft. we re-enter the gorge; a thread-like bridge is identifiable below. We bend right, following the river; then left, apparently about to cast away its guidance and to set forth, as over a wave-tossed ocean, across the trackless waste of rock-and-ice crest discernible to the South.

Yes, that's Macsymowicz's plan; and climbing rather fast we skim over a curious little snow-draped plateau. Soon on the left the helpful Thumb Peak pushes up, obvious even to a novice as

a landmark amidst this chaotic white immensity. We have reached 11,000 ft., and are unstably riding the air amidst a snowscape of crumpled mountain which stretches in every direction, ridge after ridge, horribly monotonous although in detail so varied. Not a cloud can be seen: but the air today, just a little dust-laden, lacks the exquisite watery clarity of my first flights between the plains and Gilgit. Perhaps the distances consequently seem even bigger than they are.

Rakaposhi rises on the right, also Haramosh; and on the left Nanga Parbat very remotely appears, showing part of her tremendous, unclimbable eastward precipices. How wonderful to have three such famous crests in view at once!

We head towards the Thumb Peak, presumably to pass to the right of it. No; Macsymowicz slightly changes course; we shall cut behind it, to the left. This should be exciting. We are now over 13,000 ft. I have that slight headache felt after rather quick climbs—and is there such a thing as an altitude smell? Whatever the scientific truth, my nostrils say yes, finding in the in-breathed air something distinctive and familiar, perceived in high-flying aircraft before.

I glance over my left shoulder. I was wrong, I now realize, about the cloudlessness. Almost infinitely far off, topped with snowy white and sunlit gold, its lower flanks inkily black, gouged out by shadowy holes, a single enormous thunder-mass towers over the region of Central Tibet; and from its shining topmost convexities it flings northward, still higher, a thin anvil-shaped extension. This, Macsymowicz estimates, from the known mountain-summits between 20,000 and 25,000 ft. in that area, must reach 35,000 ft. or more.

Beneath us at times, very deep down, so that we seem as unconcerned as with the geological formations of another planet, lie the bottoms of profound narrow valleys, glinting with swift waters. But next moment, bucking and swaying and trembling, the plane comes again practically within pistol-range of harsh abruptly rising crags. Some of these—we edge past them at a respectful distance—stand taller than ourselves; the Thumb Peak, an impressive spectacle now drawing near, does so by some thousands of feet.

Actual down-draughts immediately beyond the ridges that we brush over, the fearful Himalayan speciality that I had heard so

much of, are fewer than might have been expected on an undeniably turbulent afternoon. But on occasion, unforeseeably, we do drop, in nauseating sheer big falls, when the wings, on entering some local vacuum, some emptiness within the very structure of the atmosphere, find nothing to grasp.

Then the earth's gravitational pull violently prevails over our effrontery of mechanized flight, sucking at us; for brief awful moments we fail, in the technical sense, to be airborne, because no air exists to bear us; everything outside our bodies seems to collapse in one piece, and within, our bowels jerk up, in sickening acute intensification of that feeling felt during the first few seconds' descent in the express-lift of a New York skyscraper.

Now the snowy Thumb Peak fills much of the starboard sky. Soon we will pass very near it—but I am scarcely interested any more, because of the dazzling transcendent glory opening up beyond: Nanga Parbat. From her position and ours, it is clear that Macsymowicz means to take us much closer to her than I have been in an aircraft before, indeed to fly his Dakota across her lap.

Already she seems gigantic—in what, even before, was a sizeable enough landscape. From her shoulders depends a glittering array of hanging glaciers, perhaps the most terrible such series in the length of the Himalayas, certainly the most destructive of skilled mountaineering lives. This is the part of her, the great icy shoulders, where disaster had stricken every expedition which had hitherto tried to scale her.

We approach, midge-like, or perhaps rather as a small clumsy buzzing beetle. Shakily we begin our traverse of the airy spaces between her huge knees and breasts, and once again I am wonder-struck by her glorious solitude. This is Nanga Parbat's unique distinction. Because of it, she has no equal in scenic majesty on the earth's surface. That at least is my belief; Macsymowicz's Polish fervour for her now pulses unrestrained within me. Here is the very perfection of mountainhood, supreme in beauty and terror.

Unlike Rakaposhi in the adjacent Karakoram, unlike the famous peaks elsewhere to West and East which I have had the luck to see—Tirich Mir in Chitral, Nanda Devi, Trisul and Panchuli in Kumaon, Dhaulagiri in Nepal, or Kanchenjunga and Everest beyond Darjeeling—she totally dominates the

sector in which she is placed. No nearby rival rises to jostle or distract the eye; she is peerless, reigning in white shining loveliness over a special upper air-stratum between 20,000 and 27,000 ft., in which, for scores of miles in every direction, she lives alone.

Satiation by grandeur is a possible state of mind. The term accurately describes mine for several minutes at this phase of the flight. Remembrance is confused, chaotic—as certainly the landscape was, the more so when viewed from so unsteady a vehicle. At one place, half-buried under snow at 13,000 ft. or more, a thin shape wriggled on our starboard flank: the outline apparently of an unfinished road, a strange thing to find amidst such vast desolation, and at this height. But, at the time, the impression only half-recorded itself; I forgot to ask Macsymowicz about it, then or afterwards; whether it really was a road, or what else it could have been, I never knew.

And now, before I properly grasp the fact, we have almost finished our bumptious puny crossing of Nanga Parbat's snow-draped knees, and Macsymowicz points to the Babusar pass just ahead.

Shedding some of our height we slip over it, flying close—and continue our descent on the far side. Soon in the whiteness a small building appears, sturdily built, well roofed: the topmost rest-house along the jeep-route, explains Macsymowicz. Beyond it, grey and opaque, lies a frozen pool—and memory jerks me to a similar scene years ago in the Norwegian high fjeld. Now we make a wonderful leftward turn, held almost beyond escape within steep hills, following the valley's course.

Its floor seems very near: how far are we from the ground, I ask Macsymowicz? About 250 ft. he answers rather curtly. Another rest-house comes into view. Our descent between snow-cliffs proceeds. The barren upper zone is behind us. Beginnings of forest appear; snow-laden Christmas trees sprinkle the slopes.

I glance at the instrument panel: only 9,000 ft. now. We have cast away about 4,000 ft. of altitude rather fast. Oh . . . in front our valley ceases to exist, we are trapped; a huge blank wall of conifer-strewn white mountain faces us, blocking exit; certainly we have not the height to climb out. But before I have time to get fully frightened the valley can be seen to elbow between

precipices to starboard, a right-angled turn which, banking beautifully, we contrive to take with it. I did not know Dakotas could do such things. Now, when the peril has passed, my heart is in my mouth.

"You're enjoying seeing the Kaghan valley, aren't you?" says Macsymowicz, looking sideways at me; and only at this point, still dazed with the half-absorbed glories of Nanga Parbat but recalling his remark at Skardu, do I grasp that these doings are for my sake.

Turning this way, then that, never more than a few hundred feet from the valley-floor, we continue our descent with it. We pass the third rest-house. Signs of habitation begin: footprints in the snow; here and there blue smoke wavering from the snowy roofs of a village.

So twisty is the valley's course that at one moment, judging from the sun, we must have been flying nearly due North, opposite to our true direction. The snow, in places, now has dirty brown patches in it, and I notice that the altimeter records only 7,000 ft.; we have reached the zone of thaw.

Here the valley narrows between woods. Again we seem quite trapped. But I am getting hardened to these semblances of doom and have a wonderful pilot, experienced in this country. We emerge, banking away from our difficulty with gracious ease.

Height scarcely exceeds 6,000; no snow remains. Certainly, to reassure patriotic Pakistani questioners, I can now say that I have seen the Kaghan, for already Macsymowicz has thrust his Dakota down about 50 miles of it. We travel in a deep cleft, thickly forested. It gets bumpy again. Irritatingly, the sunshine keeps switching on and off like a searchlight; and glancing up, I realize that our speed and the undulating, wooded crest 4,000 or so ft. above to our right are between them causing this, though in early afternoon the sun still rides the sub-tropical heavens high.

Banking suddenly, we enter a hollow, rocky place, very steep-flanked, an amphitheatre apparently, from which any sort of egress seems inconceivable. This really must be the end. However skilful Macsymowicz is, here we reach finality; we have ventured too much.

But no, again! We perform a climbing turn amazing in such an aircraft, and, aiming at a low saddle precisely calculated by

Macsymowicz, we skim out, almost scraping the tops of the deodar trees; and I realize that, though the hazard seemed even worse this time, I was less frightened.

Abruptly the valley drops away; we are clear of it. Now we begin to bump on methodically for home, over Muzafferabad, towards 'Pindi.

Tension having eased, I feel qualms about Rahim, and clamber back to the passenger-compartment. He looks reprovingly at me, with good cause. But though very airsick he has had no ear-pain, thanks to Macsymowicz's thoughtful piloting.

Chapter 19

JOURNEY TO SRINAGAR

TO my consternation, on reaching 'Pindi, I found officialdom still deadlocked. Everyone seemed well disposed to my crossing the cease-fire line to Srinagar; no one, after weeks of effort, had got a decision.

Three Administrations were involved: those of the U.N., of Pakistan, and of India; and the last two, for an affair such as this, possessed separate military and civilian sides. In consequence, a huge papery "case" had piled up over my unhappy little application: demi-official letters, memoranda in quintuplicate, telegrams, even radio messages in cypher. Not only had authorities in Karachi, Delhi and Srinagar been consulted or informed, besides those in 'Pindi itself, but subsidiary ones in Lahore, Muzafferabad, Chakoti, and Uri. All this was about a proposed journey on what, before 1947, had been the main tourist route to Kashmir, open to anyone without hindrance or formality.

Days of uncertainty ensued, vexatious, not worth recounting. And the 'Pindi weather happened to be unseasonably hot, already over 100° in the afternoons. The coppersmith-bird monotonously clanked; and in the stuffy night, fracturing sleep, came a nearby brainfever-bird's outbursts of harsh notes, infuriatingly just out of tune, each time a surprise.

At last, on April 18, a message arrived which, while not finalizing my affair, unravelled it enough to justify my proceeding as far as Muzafferabad. Rahim of course was not now with me. For a venture such as this, contemporary Asian politics wrenched us apart; and I missed him, almost as a piece of myself, for in recent weeks we had been inseparable. But whereas I was merely British, a puzzling but perhaps no longer dangerous species, he was that fatal thing, a Pakistani. It was inconceivable under existing conditions that he would be allowed to cross the line—even had he not, which was worse, been a tribal Pathan and an ex-sepoy of the Scouts.

"Watch out for yourself, Sahib!" he had urged on departure, saluting as usual on such occasions, before we embraced in

PLATE 25

A view of Muzafferabad, capital of Azad Kashmir, perched above the Kishenganga river

PLATE 26. Sikh sepoy of the Indian Army, dressed for athletics
(Photographed in India, 1951)

Muslim style. "Hindus are all serpents. You're too trustful. And don't let any of those hairy Sikhs near you!"

He scanned my face. Evidently what he saw was not wholly reassuring, for, as he set off on his 10-days' holiday, pleased at the thought of rejoining wife and family in his village, he threw over his shoulder final advice, good-hearted but unwise. "Borrow a revolver off one of the officers if you can!"

I was shorn too, in 'Pindi, of something else dear to me: my Chitrali cap—an ideal garb, I had found, for travel in dry, sunny climates. But caps, in modern Asia, can be serious things bristling with political significances, as provocative as shirts were in the Europe of the 1930's. Good men have been brought to jail or the grave because of them.

"I do hope you're not going in that?" a kind U.N. official had asked, glancing at my headgear, when I called on him the day before. "You won't find it helps over there. Conventional European clothes, I'd suggest; a soft felt hat."

I saw his point, and complied.

More serious, he expressed misgivings about my camera. All might go well with it, of course, but there could be no guarantee. People near military establishments sometimes got jumpy about such things. If they confiscated it, that wouldn't be good for the rest of my trip, would it? Very reluctantly, I left the camera behind also.

And what about confidential papers? Presumably I had taken many notes in Pakistan. Was it possible—I would know best—that Indian eyes, running over them, would find items that they oughtn't to see? Hotel bedrooms weren't always private, as a person of my experience would appreciate. In any country, agents sometimes got access to them when the occupant was out. Might it not be fairer if, before leaving, I put such papers into safe-custody, say, at my bank?

Even Muzafferabad was warm. Where recently people had shrouded themselves against a sharp North wind in shawls and blankets, the young men strolled the little town's one street in striped cotton pajama-suits, as if just out of bed.

The river was much fuller, bulging with snow-water. Shisham trees by the roadside flaunted bright new foliage; and in their branches the kites, degraded carrion-eating hawks, with unseemly fuss and frenzied cries were mating.

I lived this time mainly with the military, near the Domel bridge. Muzafferabad, like Kotli, was a brigade headquarters, with a U.N. observers' post attached. Staying in it were two American observers, an Australian, a Belgian, and a British signals expert. There was no luxury; facilities were improvised and crude.

Judging from talk in the Mess, the opposing Pakistani and Indian armies on this sector were less icily estranged than I had found earlier at Hajira or Kotli. True, Indian-held Kashmir was repeatedly called "Ghulam Kashmir", an ugly term which I had seldom heard before.[1] Nevertheless, pleasant little mutual courtesies were referred to.

For example a flock of Pakistani goats, with accompanying goatherd—a small boy—had recently trespassed over no-man's-land. Indian troops had rounded them up. Learning this, the Pakistani brigadier in a message through the U.N. had deplored to his Indian counterpart that any goats from his area should have been such incompetent map-readers; and they were soon sent back, with a polite answer—and the boy. Two drowsy Indian sepoys, taking their lorry down the road one evening behind a white-painted U.N. vehicle, had mistaken their position or their orders, crossed the line inadvertently, and been forthwith arrested on the Pakistani side and removed blindfold to headquarters. But their return was quickly arranged; and they found, to their surprise, that fresh blindfolding was not required.

It was with the Belgian, a grey-haired captain, that I eventually set off in triumph, formalities finished, for my own transit of the line. A companionable man, he drove with skilful abandon, commenting volubly on current affairs, and waving to villagers who, recognizing our conspicuous white jeep from afar, saluted gleefully from the roadside. Indian and Pakistani officers seldom bothered to return such greetings, he said; what a pity! Like the Swede whom I had met at Hajira, he had found Asia unexpectedly congenial, and made many friends.

From his remarks, and those by U.N. colleagues of his earlier at Muzafferabad, 'Pindi, Kotli and Hajira, a consensus of opinion seemed to emerge on certain points—which was interesting, since these observers came from such a variety of non-Asian armies: American, Australian, British, Canadian, Danish, Dutch, New Zealand—as well as Swedish and Belgian.

[1] Ghulam means servant or slave; to be contrasted with "Azad", free

They all agreed that, on both sides of the line, the troops were first-class. Of the officers they thought less well. The Indian Army, proportionately as well as numerically, had rather more well-trained officers; its educational standards were higher. But intrinsic aptitude for leadership, they inclined to think, might be stronger on the Pakistani side. The Indians had been rash, in the observers' view, to get rid of their British technical experts so fast; serious deficiencies had resulted. The Pakistanis, at present, gained from having kept more experts in their service.

One U.N. observer considered the Pakistani Armed Forces less rule-bound; he described them as "superior in enterprise and constructive power." Two of his colleagues disputed this, though agreeing that the Pakistanis were more energetic in matters which happened locally to come to notice, such as road-repairs. This particular item however might merely be because the areas close behind the Indian side of the line had fewer inhabitants.

Most of the observers seemed to have found the Indians, in their official attitude at any rate, stiffer towards the U.N. organization. This perhaps reflected the controversy in 1949 when a senior member of the U.N. staff was charged by the Indian Government with having helped a pro-Pakistani family exiled from Srinagar to remove some property from there.

Rising a little all the way, the well-engineered tourist road accompanied the swollen Jhelum river, tossing below in its narrow bed. Steep pine-clad hills descended from the right; on the left, behind the parapet, was usually a short drop straight to the dense brown water. Or sometimes the valley broadened; then we rushed through mud-walled villages, or zigzagged forth between terraced rice-fields and small orchards. Military installations became numerous, but less obtrusive and smaller, tucked away amidst trees. Signs of war-damage increased: charred buildings, or the smashed remains of former bridges. Though picturesque in its way, the landscape was undistinguished and monotonous, typical of Azad Kashmir, and of vast other tracts in the Himalayan foothills. We had not yet reached the height where handsome deodar forests grow.

Chakoti, the last Pakistani military post, was reached after about 40 miles. It crowned a knoll to the right of the road, and consisted of reconstructed peasant huts and cow-byres, to which

had been added new mud-and-log buildings. Parked outside stood two more white-painted U.N. jeeps, very noticeable. One, the Belgian captain mentioned, had brought up the American colonel also stationed at Muzafferabad; he had arrived a few hours ahead, to verify that arrangements were in order. The other had come over from Uri, on the Indian side, bringing the U.N. observer stationed there, who would be responsible for my actual crossing of the line. I was amazed and embarrassed at such elaborations on my behalf.

The Pakistani captain in command plied us with offers of lunch, which our time-table did not permit. Years before, in a hired car, I had done this trip from Muzafferabad to Srinagar in an afternoon. But now the transit of the line, and formalities on the far side, would take no one quite knew how long, yet the authorities in Srinagar had specified an exact time for my reaching the Vale of Kashmir at the Baramula check-post; we could therefore risk no unscheduled delay.

While final procedures completed themselves in the adjacent office we sat in the sun, sipping tea and nibbling biscuits. I got acquainted with the U.N. observer who was to take me over, a blond Danish boy, enthusiastic, pleasantly vague about details of Delkarian affairs, proud of his Gurkha orderly whom he said we should meet at Uri. The American colonel discussed the war in Korea and his prospects of promotion. Thunder growled in the hills ahead.

"Well, this is quite an occasion", said the Pakistani captain. "I can't think when we last had a British writer going across; I believe it's only happened once. Let's celebrate. We'll take tea along, and be hospitable to the Indians in no-man's-land."

So off we set in the three white jeeps, followed by a Pakistani Army lorry bringing orderlies, tea-things, and a tin of sweet biscuits.

The actual dividing-line between the two opposed armies at Chakoti runs down a stream in a little side-valley or ravine, which spills at right-angles into the Jhelum about a quarter of a mile beyond the Pakistani post where we had sat. You go on up the former tourist-road, and reach a corner, where a final Pakistani sentry-box and a road-barrier await you; from there you find that the road, suddenly rough and untended, bends sharply right; then it crosses the stream by an improvised wooden bridge

—the original masonry one having been wrecked—and bends back again to the same sort of position at the far side. There, about 300 yards away, you see the first Indian sentry-box and another road-barrier. Everything between the two road-barriers is no-man's-land.

Beyond the distant Indian sentry-box we beheld military vehicles halted under trees; and uniformed figures were strolling down to the bridge. We got out of our cars, one of the U.N. officers raised the road-barrier, and we strolled down likewise, orderlies behind carrying the tea-things.

Suddenly a Pakistani flight-lieutenant who was one of our considerable group pointed across the ravine to the group on the far side, exclaiming excitedly: "Why, that's Nair, that smaller chap with the captain's badges! We used to be at college together; we shared a room."

His eager pleasure was charming to watch. An old friend was over there, of whom he had heard nothing since 1947, severed from him by Partition. Now they would meet. It seemed that there could be no more auspicious beginning for our tea-party.

And so, for a while, it proved. The two groups mingled happily, all smiles and animation. Any preliminary awkwardness and reserve gave way before the fortunate coincidence of Ahmed's and Nair's friendship.

But then a change developed, as distressing to watch as Ahmed's spontaneous first pleasure had been delightful. There was increasing constraint; the smiles became artificial, began to freeze—though the wish to smile and be intimately sociable clearly remained. But Nair could not ask Ahmed, nor Ahmed ask Nair, what his unit was or his work consisted in, where he was now posted or to be sent next, who his colleagues were, how other friends in the Forces were getting on; all the easy exchanges natural between young officers meeting after absence were congealed by grim thoughts of rival Indian and Pakistani military security.

Their embarrassment spread, infecting everyone—the American, the Belgian, myself, even the cheerful young Dane. There we stood uneasily at the cease-fire line. We wanted to be friends, to make our tea-party a success; but we were gripped by political forces outside ourselves, by new-fangled Delkarian patriotisms, by the fears and loyalties and hatreds of Partition. Shifting from

one foot to another we talked inanely on, with frozen smiles on our lips.

But the Dane, who after completion of transit-formalities took me in his keeping, was not of a type to be depressed for long. He was under 30, and as he drove me impetuously on to Uri I saw that life was good for him; he had golden hair, blue eyes. Delkarians and their politics were in his opinion incomprehensible really; no Westerner could understand them. That such nice people should have got in such a tangle was very sad, of course. But it had given him a fascinating new life, with novelty and adventure such as he could not have hoped for otherwise; and how amusing to have this absurd little Gurkha orderly, who grinned all the time and worked so well, though neither could understand a word the other said.

Whistling or singing Nordic snatches of song, when not inconsequently commenting on the peculiarities of Delkaria, he drove his white U.N. jeep fast even at corners, remarking in explanation—doubtless when he noticed me rather wide-eyed—that practically no civilian traffic passed on this bit of road; that was why the Indians did not bother to keep it in better repair. Behind us, though soon lost to view, came the Indian Army vehicle, carrying young Captain Nair and the two public relations officers who were to be my companions from Uri to Srinagar.

Like Chakoti, Uri is a tiny place—and had been made the tinier, since I last passed through in 1940, by young Gulmar's fellow-tribesmen the Mahsuds, and their Wazir and Afridi allies, as the first wave of them swept up the valley on their raid in October 1947. Stumps of shattered masonry stuck through the grass, all that remained of the several buildings then burned down.

Indian and U.N. officers were housed in one of the few substantial structures left. Accommodation was rough. After we had had a meal, and the Dane's Gurkha orderly, grinning, had been duly introduced, I set off on the final stage with my new escorts Lt.-Col. Srinavasan and Major Sharma, the Indian Army p.r.o.'s.

Of the former, still only about 35, I had heard when working in my Delhi office. He possessed one of those delightful Madrasi faces, long, intelligent, grave, which even in a young man suddenly crinkle on smiling into a wealth of unexpected tiny folds. His origin in the far South ensured objective approach to

the bitter controversies of North Delkaria; moreover much of his upbringing had been in Burma. Sharma, moustached and sturdy, an officer from the Gurkhas, was a Punjabi.

Winding continually, the road still followed the bed of the Jhelum, at first through very broken country, which no doubt had always been sparsely inhabited, and where hardly a civilian was now to be seen. Indian Army camps and stores and car-parks were many and well dispersed, occupying sites which soon developed great beauty. For the scrub and featureless shaggy pines had been left behind; decorative deodars replaced them, nobly standing on natural lawns or "margs." We had reached a new sort of landscape and cooler air. This was the real Kashmir.

Down the road, moving beautifully, swung a platoon of bearded Sikhs: tall, strong, turbaned, clad in jungle-green battle-dress, their limbs rhythmically unified in military precision. They were glorious. Leaning from the jeep, Rahim's parting injunctions forgotten, I waved and cheered. Except for a few in London, unsatisfactory specimens in Western attire, I had not set eyes on a Sikh since leaving India in April 1951. Practically none existed in Western Pakistan; the great commotion of 1947-48 had swept them from that entire area.

"God put beards on men, so why cut them off?" The remark was a Calcutta Sikh's years before when, incipiently bearded myself after an illness, I had been enquiring into such matters. Applied to patriarchs, his opinion may appear open to dispute; a 15-inch beard never razored, grey yet virginal, can scarcely be a pleasant bedfellow or convenient at meals. But the short bristly or softly youthful beards worn by brawny young fighting men, marching in strong tropical sunshine, are magnificent objects. Applied now on the Uri-Baramula road to this fine platoon, the Calcutta Sikh's remark seemed to embody a profound natural truth, incontrovertible.

The sunshine was becoming fitful however; soon it ceased, cut off by a closure of the bulging thunder-clouds which had grumbled all afternoon. As we reached Baramula the storm broke with Himalayan vigour. Lightning dazzled us; splintering crashes apparently rent the mountain-tops; wind-lifted rain, almost horizontal, smote our starboard flank. A jeep is ill-fitted to resist sideways watery onslaught of this sort; had I not happened to bring a blanket, I would have been soused as well as chilled.

Through curtains of swaying liquid not much of Baramula could be seen, but enough to realize that this town, the gateway to the Vale of Kashmir, had been less knocked about by the Pathan incursion of October 1947 than official Indian photographs issued at the time suggested. Parts of it were indeed still a shambles; but large other parts, unreconstructed, stood intact. By comparison with devastated Mirpur in Azad Kashmir, it was thriving and populous.

Then before us under unwonted grey skies the great Vale opened, still in places rain-swept, 85 miles long by 25 wide. Rows of tall poplars in early greenery adorned and emphasized its flatness; big white and mauve irises, the "flags" of English summer gardens, growing wild, and smaller heraldic blue ones, carpeted the uncultivated ground and village greens; there were watercourses and flowery orchards; and rimming it all remotely to North and South loomed the mountain ranges, mysteriously blue, or silvery where shafts of light through holes in the clouds touched an occasional snow-crest. It was very beautiful; I had not seen Kashmir in April before.

Items of political and military interest had been pointed out by Srinavasan and Sharma, in Baramula and on either side: the Roman Catholic hospital and convent, which the raiders had sacked, shooting some of the nuns and visitors, smashing the furniture and medicines; a plaque on a shop-front, commemorating a Muslim of Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference whom the raiders were said to have crucified for withholding information; wayside memorials to Indian Army units or individual officers who fought or fell during the opening skirmishes.

Tired now after the long unusual day, cold from the rain-soaked air, I reflected as we drove up the poplar-bordered road upon a strange and pleasing fact. To these keen young Indian Army officers I must have been replete with fascinating knowledge; I had just emerged from Azad Kashmir and Pakistan—for them a forbidden region, a land of mystery, on which nearly all their present work and interest focussed. I presumably knew all kinds of thrilling things: about troop dispositions, postings of individual commanders, professional rivalries, strategic arguments, weapons and equipment, morale, political intrigues. Yet so admirably delicate was their sense of courtesy that without

effort they had abstained from asking me any embarrassing questions, or even suggesting a wish to.

The reflection recalled an episode of my Pakistani travels in the previous year, while I was still with "The Statesman", and had been delivering addresses to personnel of the R.P.A.F., giving them my impressions of Pakistan after several months' absence.[1] I lack lecturing skill; but one address, I sensed, went better than the rest, for it was informal, a mere after-dinner talk in the Mess to Zaffar Chaudhury's fighter squadron, most of whom I knew.

At any rate I enjoyed it; and I felt accordingly perplexed when, at the end, there were silences instead of lively questions. After the audience had moved to another room I asked Chaudhury what was wrong.

"I think I know, but I'll make sure."

He was back in a few moments. "It's just as I supposed", he remarked. "They'd heaps of questions to put. But almost every one led straight to comparisons within India, which they thought, in your present position, couldn't fairly be asked of you.'

Would Europeans, I wondered, as we drove on in quiet twilight, be spontaneously capable of such tact, Indian and Pakistani, as had been shown on these two occasions?

Nedou's was my destination in Srinagar, one of Asia's best-known hotels. I had wondered whether I would get good accommodation, supposing it crowded with Army officers and tourists from the Indian plains. I found the management dispirited. Of the 90 or so rooms, fewer than 25 were occupied. Bookings for May had been disappointing; and last year's experiment of reopening the subsidiary chalet at Gulmarg, closed since the raiders looted it in 1947, had proved a fiasco.

[1] See p. 26

Chapter 20

ABDULLAH AND HIS PEOPLE

A PAIR of bulbuls, the pretty brown songbirds of Persian poetry, were pecking at spilt sugar-grains on the verandah outside my room next morning. Over the lawn below striped wings flashed, black and saffron; a hoopoe alighted and strutted about, long-billed, crested, very elegant. From nearby foliage floated the liquid notes of the Indian dove. You could smell fires of resinous Himalayan deodar-logs, other humbler fires of burnt cow-dung—but also, when a breeze shook the rain-drenched chenar trees, something like the smell of London parks on wet days, for the chenar and the plane are close relations.

The Vale of Kashmir is Asian; yet it seems almost in Europe too. Dandelions and little pink-and-white daisies sprinkled the grass; the borders were gay with pansies and wallflowers. And suddenly the Indian dove's monotonous cooing would be over-run by the very English-sounding staccato of a cuckoo.

In the streets and along the Bund—Srinagar's pleasant riverside walk—the touts and hawkers pestered you as usual; indeed more so, for the five years' slump in the tourist trade, resulting from the Indo-Pakistani fighting and the subsequent political stress, had whetted their appetite. If conspicuously a Westerner, which, in the hat recommended by the U.N., I willy-nilly was, movement became almost impossible without sharp-eyed, shabby men pressing upon you woodwork, massage or embroidered shawls, fur-lined shoes, papier-mâché bowls, tailoring, carpets, taxicabs for hire, or shikara-boats to take you on the lake. Some of these wheedlers tried a cheerful, truculent, domineering manner; others approached sidelong, so obsequious and furtive that the suggested shawls or shikaras, you could not but surmise, cloaked impending offers of "feelthee peectures" or even stranger joys.

Visitors, whether Western or Delkarian, get unfavourable ideas of Srinagar and Kashmiris from these inescapable attentions. In 1940 my former Pathan motor-driver Anwar Khan,[1] a newcomer, was shocked into an ingenious blasphemy.

[1] See pp. 35, 36

"God must have got tired up here, Sahib. I think he was so busy making the country beautiful that he forgot how to create men."

A novelty had since arisen. Grotesque signboards in English adorned many of the shop-fronts by the Bund—a local by-product of World War II. Some genuine mistake in words or spelling must once have amused Allied troops on leave, attracting eager custom. Thereafter almost every second tradesman had sought to allure by artificial absurdity or error. "Victory Vernal Showers, Woodcarving," announced one, as I wandered along; "Suffering Moses Papier-mâché", another; "Busybee Tailoring", a third. You could enter, if you wished, the establishment of "Sudhana the Worst, Jewellery, Embroidery, Woodcarvery", or "The Jehovah Shammah Apiaries", or "Cheerful Chippendale." The plump proprietor of "Shining Roses Papier-Machy" awaited you ingratiatingly at his door.

But the impression thus created of servility and greed, of vice and double-facedness, was in part incorrect and unfair. If you possessed a little Urdu, an enquiring mind and friendliness, you could also find much pleasanter qualities. The Kashmiris of the Vale, gentle and unvalorous in temperament, have been dealt with very harshly by history. For centuries they were subjugated or intrigued against by stronger neighbours, rival imperialisms; bossed or exploited successively by Moghuls and Afghans, Sikhs, Dogras and British; and since 1947 there had been the squabbling new competitors, perhaps as perplexing as any—independent India and Pakistan. Prolonged victimization and uncertainty seem to have brought all their worst attributes to the surface, leaving others to await gradual discovery.

Many Kashmiris are gifted with a vivid aesthetic sense. Others, perhaps not so endowed, nevertheless have wonderful aptitude in handicrafts. The produce of the petty artisans, working so hard for a pittance, is astonishing; and they can be dependable and honest as well as industrious. A joke and a kind heart yield excellent results.

Needing clothes in Srinagar, I ordered a tweed coat. So well cut was it that, when settling my bill two days before leaving, I indicated regret at not having ordered a suit.

"Why, I can finish one for you tomorrow evening, Sir, before you go", declared tailor-master Sultan Mohammad. "Two

fittings, morning and afternoon; no extra charge, no difficulty." And so it turned out. The suit has since been worn confidently at an Ambassadorial reception in London. Its cut, critics say, has no fault; it was not dear; and the speed with which it was done was a credit to Kashmir's tourist industry and would shame any West End tailor.

I did not try to ascertain the political wishes of the people in and around Srinagar. To ask whether, if the promised plebiscite were held, they would choose India or Pakistan seemed wholly futile. Knowing something of their character, a stranger could feel sure only of this: that whatever he heard on so dangerous a topic would as probably be false as true. They were timid; their real opinion would be withheld.

But one fact did emerge, spontaneous, unsought. Many of the poorer folk almost desperately wanted a decision of some sort, any sort; that at least would be better than none.

A shop-window would be cautiously closed, a shoulder be glanced over, a door drawn to. "Sir, what will happen to us, please?" they would pathetically ask. "You big man, Sir, British journalist, I believe. You know all about politics. Surely they will decide soon? It is so many years. Have you heard anything, Sir?"

To such people the new India and Pakistan, with their continual disagreements, their high policies and principles competingly proclaimed from Delhi or Karachi, signified nothing. They felt no patriotic sentiment towards either. Their thoughts could not reach so far; they were simple Kashmiris. They wanted only what the humble throughout the world first want: a bare livelihood, some security, and chance of better days. And this last, for them, necessarily meant more tourists. So long as one of the two main roads to their country from the rich plains below was blocked, and political disputation and uncertainty persisted, how could they hope to prosper?

On April 21 I spent three hours with Sheikh Abdullah, one of modern Asia's most controversial figures, Prime Minister of the Indian-supported Government of Kashmir, and head of the Kashmiri political party known as the National Conference, an adjunct of the Indian Congress party. We sat in his garden.

He is a tall, well-built man of about 50. We had not previously

met, though in Delhi and elsewhere I had seen him. Earlier in my editorship he had been much in jail, imprisoned by the Maharajah. And, latterly, before my retirement, as I could not meet the Azad Kashmir leaders on the Pakistani side without likelihood of enraging Pandit Nehru's Government and hazarding my paper, I abstained on principle from seeking interviews with Sheikh Abdullah or his supporters.

I liked him. Why he gave me so much time I do not know, for most of what he said was familiar, a recapitulation of the stock Indian propaganda points on this bitter Kashmir controversy. But we met at an interesting moment—a few days after his speech at Ranbirsinghpura in the Jammu region of Indian-held Kashmir, a speech which proved the first step in his gradual decline from unqualified popularity in Indian eyes. He had been provoked, it seemed, by utterances in Jammu by the Indian Defence Minister Mr Gopalaswami Ayyengar, who from 1937 to 1943 had been Prime Minister of Kashmir under the Maharajah's Administration.[1]

His clothing and apparent way of life surprised me. Said to be the son of a poor shawlmaker, he had been publicized in India as a man of the people. The famous astrakhan cap was indeed in use; but everything else—the blue lounge suit, the conventional necktie, the pet dog, the well-kept garden, the large dwelling in the background—indicated a Westernized politician established in comfortable upper-middle-class style.

There was nothing wrong in this, except the contrary impression earlier put about. And for that perhaps he was not responsible; the incongruity extended much further. Events since August 1947 had displayed the Congress party's previously advertised self-abnegation and austerity as largely bogus. In 1937 its leading personages, on accepting Provincial Ministerships while still struggling against the British Raj, had ostentatiously renounced large slabs of salary. They were at one with the humble multitudes, it was implied; were representatives of the poor, not comfort-loving bureaucrats.

But when national independence came they did not scruple to take their salaries in full, or appear to think the contrast in conduct needed explaining. Some of them, sincere Gandhians, certainly preferred a simple life—like some, though proportionately fewer,

[1] See p. 107

of their British predecessors. But it could be seen that both sets of people, brown and white, when in the same posts of power, performed much the same social moves—because much the same social system moved them. Congressmen who, not long before, had eaten frugally in ashrams,[1] for preference or for politics, squatting peasant-fashion on the earth, now gave formal dinners for diplomatists in the big white-pillared bungalows of the capital, surrounded by attendants in scarlet and gold—and did so with poise and efficiency. A trenchant critic formerly of British grandeur at New Delhi, Pandit Nehru, on becoming the new India's Prime Minister, soon established himself in the palace—it is no less—built to house British Commanders-in-Chief.

"How thrilling for you, living through such revolutionary times in India!" acquaintances in Britain exclaimed on my return.

"Yes, very thrilling", I would agree. "Big changes; a bloody and horrible civil war. But no social revolution yet, I'm afraid. You seem to have had much more of that, in your quiet way, here in England."

Interviewing importantly-placed men such as Prime Ministers—whether of India or Kashmir—is a job for which I am not trained or temperamentally fitted. I realize that I do not know the right questions to ask, and wonder whether, if I did, I would have the effrontery. I came into journalism accidentally from Government service. However, after attaining editorship, I made a curious discovery. At any rate in Asia, if you abandon all attempt at professional interviewing, if you simply let the talk take its course without interjecting comments or striving to direct it, then, if you are lucky—and Asia often is a lucky place—everything may spontaneously flow towards you.

The eminent personage perhaps happens that day to be in expansive mood; or, kind-hearted and noticing your embarrassment, may want to help. And because you are receptive, acquiescent, putting nothing out, your appreciation of what is said and—much more important—your ability to perceive and take in its delicate undertones, may greatly benefit. You are relaxed, passive. You readily accept the role of receiver, letting the great man, in his own way, become the giver; and your thoughts then blend with his. You watch and can afterwards

[1] Hindu monastic institutions

recollect the movement of his mind, opened before you in unhurried clarity.

I once experienced a blending of this nature with perhaps the most unusual Asian mind of this century, Mahatma Gandhi's. It was in December 1945, on the floor of an earth-and-bamboo hut at the Sodhepur ashram, some miles north of Calcutta. Remembrance of it has kept very fresh; of my several interviews with him at various times, all helpful, this was the best. Years afterwards Mr Peary Lal, his devoted secretary—who, as was his custom, assiduously scribbled notes throughout—referred to it appreciatively. The Mahatma spent the time mainly in a fascinating retrospect of his early life and struggles; he was thinking aloud, forgetful almost of his hearer. He spoke of his non-co-operation in South Africa, and what it had meant to his personal development; of British editors in India whom he had met in the old days, and how some had been polite or friendly and others not; of how horrified he had been, when he first visited Calcutta, by its size and squalor, and the atmosphere of money-making and evil which he felt in it; and of much else. And according to Mr Peary Lal, except for the preliminary amiabilities before squatting down, I spoke only six short sentences throughout the 55 minutes.

Confronting me I see again on the floor, cocooned feet and all in a white shawl, only the singular head protruding, nationalist India's leading personage, propped by a padded back-rest; beside him a lamp, a few sticks of furniture, a book or two, and the scribbling secretary. The scratch of pen or flip of pages, the clank and hiss of passing trains, and the occasional roar of aircraft leaving Dum-Dum, were accompaniments to the slow voice and occasional sudden chuckles as the Mahatma reminisced.

There before me was someone very old, frail, distinguished. The structure of his mind, a strange and important mind, was reflected in this cool flow of unimpeded talk. To divert it, to risk ruffling its surface by topical questions of a professional sort, would have been a discourtesy, altogether repugnant. Therefore I sat silent; and because I did so there remains with me a particularly vivid picture of a great man, and his manner of speech and thought.

But on bidding farewell I had to modify my notions about his physical frailty. From the cocoon shot forth a small brown arm;

it gave a surprising handgrip, the warm and firmly-rounded grip of youth.

My last interview with Mr Jinnah not long before his death, mentioned in a previous chapter,[1] was similar. I spoke scarcely at all. As a result I was treated, unsought on my side, to a political review of wonderful breadth and lucidity. I also, for the first time, felt his reserve thaw somewhat, and attained, I believe, momentary touch, beyond the icily-brilliant political intellect, with a man's warm heart and suffering.

Then there were two memorable interviews with Lord Wavell. Renowned for embarrassing silences, he became at times almost loquacious. It was I who sat monosyllabic; the taciturn Viceroy discoursed.

But I digress. Digression, on such characters as these, may be forgivable.

The impression left on my mind after my three hours in a poplar-bordered Srinagar garden with the Prime Minister of Indian-held Kashmir—on my part, again, rather silent hours—was of a courageous, forthright, vigorous man; intelligent, though without great intellectual range; gifted with strong personality, and therefore probably an inspiring leader of the downtrodden.

He was obviously non-communal, wholeheartedly so. He spoke with pride of a pleasant reality I had noticed: that in and around Srinagar, no doubt because of his Administration's efforts, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims mingled in cordiality. Pre-eminently he appeared to me a Kashmiri patriot: full of zeal to improve his countrymen's plight; preoccupied with the Vale, the centre and motive of his whole political life; little concerned with the rest of the subcontinent's affairs.

This concentrated Kashmiri sentiment, perhaps, was one reason why he kept reverting to the Pathan raid. For reasons indicated earlier in this book,[2] I had never considered the Indian indignation on that subject altogether sincere. It seemed disproportionate, when considered against the welter of other barbarities happening at that time; in large part merely a device of propaganda, a useful stick to beat Pakistan with.

But in Sheikh Abdullah it was I believe genuine. As a Kashmiri,

[1] See p. 50
[2] See Chapter 10

with ancestral recollections of previous incursions up the same route, he had felt personally outraged. The raiders were not fellow-Muslims to him—he was a secularist anyway—they were brutal outsiders.

"If they had to attack, Mr Stephens, why in Heaven's name—I said it at the time—couldn't they go to Poonch, to help the people there against that autocrat? Why must they rush towards Srinagar, looting and burning?"

"That autocrat" was the Maharajah. The interview was full of such angry or scathing references to him; on the raiders' approach, declared Sheikh Abdullah, he had fled from Srinagar "like a thief in the night." But I ventured an interjection here. Cowardly autocrat or no—and our views on this tallied—his accession to India, surely, was the sole legal basis for her troops now being in Kashmir? Was it ethical of her to have cast him out soon afterwards, when she was so much in his debt? And did it not also undermine her legal case? This he brushed aside—as he did my accompanying posers about her seizure of Hyderabad and Junagadh.[1] A leader of the long-oppressed Kashmiris of the Vale was speaking; such puzzles were primarily Delhi's business—and the Maharajah was a Dogra tyrant and deplorable anyway.

This exclusive preoccupation with his homeland, in disregard of the gigantic changes shaping elsewhere, no doubt partly explained his crucial decision in 1947 to join India—a decision which had swayed the lives of millions. His imprisonments, too, must have been a factor; he had been cut off, in fast-changing times, from discussing new political trends, or from meeting most of the nationalist Muslims then turning away from the Congress. It emerged, from what he said, that he did not at first take the idea of Pakistan seriously, nor expect her, when eventually created, to survive. Many others, better placed, misjudged likewise. I remember peering out at the time over the chaotic political scene from my editorial chair in Delhi, and feeling very dubious.

There were, besides, personal loyalties to be reckoned with; also personal ambitions. Nearly all his friends were Congressmen; his career and theirs had been entwined. Among them he was sure of being made much of. Scarcely another Muslim leader possessing solid public backing remained with them. Not only

[1] See pp. 60, 61

was India the stronger State, obviously viable; she could give him special power and honour. On the other hand he had quarrelled with Mr Jinnah; and in the League, even if this grave personal rift could be repaired, he would necessarily be no more than one local Muslim leader among many.

No doubt, in shaping his course, he had an eye for his own advantage; most people have. But he may honestly have argued that power, thus acquired, could be used idealistically for his fellow-Kashmiris' good. Perhaps he was temperamentally attracted by publicity and applause; and for producing this the Congress was still much the better organized party. Vanity, for Delkarian politicians, is the supreme danger. To be surrounded by adulation, by the many subtly abject forms of hero-worship which Oriental populations lavish on their leaders, to be the darling of multitudes, doted on by the illiterate poor, must be enough to turn anyone's head.

Sitting with him there under wind-ruffled poplars on the lawn, I asked myself: did he regret that crucial choice of his, as he looked back over the last five baffling and obstructed years? Pakistan had not collapsed, nor now seemed likely to. At his wish over three million Muslims dwelling alongside her borders had been swung over to India, in a manner outraging the main structure of the Partition. No other Muslim-majority or Hindu-majority bloc on the subcontinent had been thus treated, and the wishes of those involved had never been democractically ascertained. Indian bayonets, which meant mainly Hindu bayonets, upheld his regime. In many ways it was a good regime: energetic, full of ideas, staunchly non-communal, very go-ahead in agrarian reform. But to the eye of history it might prove an unnatural one.

That he was restive, had become less comfortable in his position, seemed indicated by the Ranbirsinghpura speech. Evidently he thought now, if not before, that in many Hindu Congressmen a façade of secular tolerance hid an actual communalism as narrow as any in Pakistan; indeed, perhaps worse, because of the caste system.

But no scope remained in his present office for undoing his decision, even had he wished. He was too far committed, had been outpaced by events. The question I had asked myself obviously could not be voiced; it would be an embarrassing futility, getting no square answer.

Nor would I now want to voice it. For I felt affection towards him. The atmosphere of the interview had changed. From the stage when, unprofessional again, I had disclosed what had been my own problem, why I had relinquished my editorship, our talk became easy, warm-hearted, free from reiterated propaganda. Understanding seemed to flow beneath and around the spoken sentences. Once more, lack of technique had helped.

I saw in him a man of pluck and enlightenment, standing for principles good in their way; a victim, like so many of us, of the unique scope and speed and confusion of the changes in 1947, and now holding a perhaps uniquely lonely and perplexing post.

Chapter 21

FAREWELL TO THE VALE

THE villagers around Srinagar seemed much as before. Living amidst unexampled prettiness, perhaps the most picture-postcardy landscape in the world, they dressed with a drab undistinction unique throughout colourful Delkaria: in garments sacklike of shape and hue, and ugly little skullcaps.

Hoping to see people so skilled in making pleasant things for others better-clad themselves when holidaying I set forth for an afternoon's drive on April 22, the anniversary of the Prophet's Ascension. The places to be stopped at included the Hazratbal mosque, where would be big crowds, perhaps in festival finery. With me was an official of Sheikh Abdullah's Government, a Hindu, enthusiastic about the people's material welfare, though vague on matters spiritual.

"Is this really the Muslims' Ascension festival?" I asked as we started. "I'd thought so; the date seems right. But that man at the hotel said something else."

"Oh, it's one of their days", he replied, and turned to the cheerful wayside throng—proof, he said, of popular content with the Administration; then to the groves of poplars newly planted under Government auspices, and the roads recently built.

The mosque at Hazratbal was of characteristic Kashmiri pattern, lacking the adjuncts of dome and minar thought necessary on the plains. At first it seemed simply a great square house, sturdy and whitewashed. It had a carved wooden roof of somewhat Buddhist type, set in tiers, heavily eaved; on the top grew grass, and a picturesque sprinkling of spring flowers. A Delkarian mosque's usual windowless Eastern and flankwise spaces were here all glassed-in, as protection against the Kashmiri winter.

Inside it was hung with coloured carpets and cloths, rich but garish. A juggler performing before a knot of holiday-makers on the lawns had however allured my escort, who did not enter; indeed he seemed rather surprised, after we had introduced ourselves to the head guardian—Hazratbal's equivalent to a cathedral Dean—at my wanting to. So was the guardian at first; only for-

mally polite, he thawed noticeably however when I mentioned shrines visited at Ajmer and elsewhere, and indicated some acquaintance with Islamic history. That apparently was unexpected, at any rate of foreign visitors who came in such company.

This important mosque contains a relic said to be of the Prophet's hair. The building and grounds were well kept. Outside, a pulpit was pointed out from which Sheikh Abdullah was wont to address the multitudes. Certainly the people crowding over the lawns, along the waterfront, and up the steps were less dismally ill-clad than the villagers earlier seen, and were enjoying their festival. Nevertheless a curious disparity remained between the landscape's flashing perfection and the unenterprising low-toned attire of Kashmiri humanity. In the Punjab, especially in the Sikh areas, rural crowds provide much richer feasts for the eye.

A pleasant afternoon's motor expedition, past Hazratbal, Shalimar, and Nasimbagh, took us also past the Maharajah's country palace, now derelict, but assigned, if it was adjudged solidly-enough built, to the newly-planned Kashmir University; and then, as we reapproached Srinagar, past something else that had been abandoned: the palatial former British Residency, now being made into a State-run emporium for Kashmiri handicrafts.

A few days later I breakfasted at "Buckingham Palace" with the Indian Army area commander. This was a houseboat near Baramula, so named originally, doubtless, to attract British tourists. I was on my way back to the cease-fire line, bidding farewell to the Vale, and had stopped here, half-way, at his hospitable invitation.

He and his staff dwelt in other houseboats, or in tents ashore. Like Lt.-Col. Srinavasan on the journey in, they were admirably tactful in avoiding questions which might embarrass me on military things seen or heard recently on the Pakistani side. And I felt sure that, over in Pakistani-held territory again, I would find equal tact there.

Talk flowed amiably on broad lines. Some senior officers of both Armies, I knew, still privately deplored the whole tragic state of Indo-Pakistani relations. They found themselves opposed to former comrades-in-arms, men whom they knew well, perhaps personal friends. I touched on this, lamenting that the remaining

comradely spirit was necessarily a wasting asset, since the youth of both countries were nurtured in mutual antagonism and could not meet; junior officers entering the Forces from the cadet schools would lack their elders' breadth of view.

Within the limits set by soldierly and political prudence the general could not have been friendlier. And before leaving, my heart warming, I ventured an anecdote.

"General," I remarked, "you won't want to comment on this; I expect you won't even smile.

"It was in Delhi," I went on, "in the winter of 1947-48, at a time when the fighting up here was bitter. I was in G.H.Q., with a colleague of yours, someone you know well. 'Stephens,' he said, 'it's all a lot of nonsense. We know the chaps we're supposed to be up against. They're among the world's best; only recently they were with us in Egypt and Italy and Burma. Now look! If only these politicians of ours could be locked up for a few days, and those on the other side as well, where they're even worse, then we soldiers would settle the whole silly business in half an hour.'

"And from my observation on this trip", I added, "I'd say many of you feel just the same even now."

He looked at me impassively, as foretold. But I think I caught a twinkle in his eye.

In Baramula I called also on the nuns at the Convent hospital, which the Pathans had attacked in October 1947. One nun was shot dead; also a British colonel and his wife and a third visitor. Another nun was badly wounded, afterwards undergoing five operations in 'Pindi. Hospital property was looted or wrecked.

These outrages all happened within the first few hours; but the raiders afterwards used the hospital as headquarters for their activities against Srinagar, and the Indian Air Force bombed it, a ward being still roofless as a result. The hapless nuns and some patients were trapped in the building, living for days in continuous expectation of death.

They spoke with factual coolness about it all. One had been smacked in the face; another compelled to open her mouth as tribesmen peered within, deciding whether a dagger could make anything of a gold-filled tooth. "Paisa, paisa" kept being demanded, meaning money. "The fat man", said to be a former

Pakistani officer, had been kind, helping to keep some sort of check on the wilder tribal youths.

"Were they mainly Wazirs and Mahsuds, or Afridis?" I asked.

"I do not know", replied the gentle nun. "They were hooligans."

Though most of the building had been repaired, and the smashed medical stores made good, she said that patients had never come back in their former numbers. Relatives of sick villagers in the surrounding country were afraid to bring them. Baramula was still felt to be too near the front line. The raid had happened bewilderingly fast; who could tell when, from some political change, another might come? And bedridden people in hospital cannot be moved quickly.

It had certainly been a very shameful affair—as I had incidentally learned from the other side, from one of those absurd episodes soon after Partition which could only befall an Englishman.

It was in February 1948. On one of my brief trips from India to Pakistan for "The Statesman" I had reached Miranshah in North Waziristan via the Punjab; and dulled by sedentary days in aircraft, cars, and offices, had on arrival demanded fresh air and a walk.

You are not allowed to wander alone in Waziristan. And being from India, I was officially reckoned in particular need then of safeguarding. However, the Political Agent, a friend of mine, said there was no necessity to bother the Scouts[1] for a bodyguard; he would provide four of his own khassadars or irregular levies.

Accordingly, escorted by these armed tribesmen, I set off, mentioning where I came from and why I wanted exercise.

"Where did you get that?" I asked one of them after a while, making conversation. From his dagger-hilt dangled some semi-precious stones.

"Pattan", he replied.

This certainly needed clearing up, for Pattan was the airfield just outside Srinagar, attained by the raiders who had swept through Baramula during the nearly successful first onrush. I stopped under the lee of a boulder to talk.

[1] The Tochi Scouts or Militia, a component of the Frontier Corps

The wind bit cold; I did up my jerkin. "Ooh!" he exclaimed in astonished delight. He had never seen a zip fastener. Yet soon this seemingly unsophisticated person, finger in sand, was drawing for me a map of the Western approaches to Srinagar which would have done a staff officer credit.

He and his friends would have taken the city, he asserted, but for the fools at Baramula behind them. These men, the second invading wave, should have sent up reinforcements. Instead, they turned aside, the nincompoops, to loot the smaller town and waste bullets on the queer-clothed foreign women. It was a complete disgrace.

"What, shooting the women?"

No, no; not that at all. The fools had ruined, within an ace of success, a very pretty little military operation.

Beside the boulder, from our different angles, we glumly pondered the affair, hunched against the wind. It blew penetratingly across Afghanistan from the snows of Russia. I could feel it searching my jerkin. Beneath his belts and bandoliers he wore only a khaki shirt.

"It's odd your telling me this", I remarked, rising with a shiver. "As you heard me say when we started, I come from India. Perhaps I'm an enemy."

"Perhaps." Hard-eyed, he stared. "We needn't consider that just at present. You've been put under my protection today."

A pause. As we set off he turned. "I don't think you are; you're only British. Hindus and Sikhs are our enemies now."

Between Baramula and Uri, on my way down the road which, four and a half years ago, the raiders had swarmed up, my Indian military escorts showed me more relics of the 1947-49 campaign: a bridge commemorating a killed Bengali officer, Sen; then the place where, during the Indian Forces' advance, a renowned V.C. of World War II, Nand Singh, had fallen to the tribesmen's harassing fire.

Formalities at the line completed themselves slowly. Eventually I got across to Pakistani-held soil at Chakoti. For the rest of that day's journey I was entrusted to a flashy young Punjabi sepoy on transfer from the Pakistani Army, driver to one of the U.N. officers.

I found him an entertaining companion: handsome, and an

exuberant trumpet-blower, doubly so, rejoicing in himself with the honest unimpeded disarming vanity of Muslim males in the full bloom of youth. Very noisy but skilful, he made our white-painted vehicle almost leap, driving continually fast—faster than the Dane—handling it with a loving vehement joy, as if it were alive.

His teeth very white, his eyelashes long, he had glanced me over, friendly but designing. What sort of Englishman was this? Could he be made use of?

"My Sahib much likes me." He threw a brilliant dark-eyed smile, tootled ear-splittingly, by-passed a cow, took a rocky precipice-edged bend apparently on two wheels, and resumed.

"I know it well, Sir. He very fine officer, better than all, full colonel, red tabs. I think he soon get me more wages."

Trumpeting, we accelerated into a village, scattering poultry.

"'You very good boy, Sultan Mubarak', he often say, Sir. And last week, when he was with Belgian gentleman, there in the back seat, I hear him make very interesting remark."

Snappy gear-change just avoided catastrophe with a bullock-cart.

"Yes, very interesting remark, Sir. 'That Sultan Mubarak,' he say, 'I like him. Very good boy indeed; clever and good. Young, beautiful, best driver in the whole of the U.N.!' You think so too, Sir? Yes? Really? Then you please tell him!"

A handcart-puller ditched himself to avoid us. Abuse was yelled after him.

"You fine Sahib also—General, I think. You not forget, Sir? Good; now more wages come very soon, next week perhaps."

In Muzaffcrabad that evening I dined with the Pakistani brigadier and his officers. It was warm. We sat by the swollen, murmurous river beneath the stars. Distant lightning flashed over the hills.

And in this pleasant company, so soon after that other pleasant company at breakfast, I reflected anew upon the tragic folly of Indo-Pakistani disagreements, as exemplified throughout my journey hitherto; on the multitudinous personal sorrow and frustration caused; on the waste, the frittering away for nearly five years of good people's limited energies and resources; and on the flagrant artificiality of today's line, the outcome of a

Princely whim, an affair born under British auspices in October 1947 of haste and inadequate forethought, of greed and fear and genuine many-sided misconceptions.

And now my Kashmiri doings were nearly over—but not quite. For tomorrow en route to Peshawar, beyond Kashmir territory at Abbottabad, I was to talk with Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas, the counterpart in political stature on the Pakistani side of Sheikh Abdullah on the Indian.[1]

I had never yet seen him. His incarcerations had been even more various than the Sheikh's. Leader of the rival Kashmiri party called the Muslim Conference, and in that capacity imprisoned (as the Sheikh often was) by the Maharajah, he had latterly, after the Indian Army's arrival, been kept on in jail by the Sheikh himself. This, the Sheikh told me in Srinagar, had been necessary for the Chaudhuri's physical safety; but there seemed scope for two opinions on that. At any rate, on his eventual release he had been permitted to go to Pakistan—a notable act of magnanimity amidst much petty spite. Not long afterwards, he became President of the Azad Kashmir Government in Muzafferabad.

I found him in sombre mood. As mentioned earlier, he had some while before given up the Azad Kashmir Presidentship, partly for personal reasons, partly from differences with the Pakistani Government; and at his bungalow in Abbottabad he brooded in temporary retirement over his country's unhappy state.

It was clear, he said, that the Americans and British had long ago agreed to do nothing. They had a policy about Kashmir of course: sheer dilly-dally. The Government at Karachi, in ever looking for justice and decision at their hands, had gravely blundered. Britain nowadays was little more than an American satellite; but presumably, so far as she had an aim, it was to stay friends with India and Pakistan simultaneously for purposes of trade—always however with one cynical qualification: that India was the wealthier and stronger. Thus, on every crucial occasion, the balance of her professed neutrality tilted against Pakistan. Admittedly such conduct was intelligible—in a brutal and unprincipled world. But it carried a danger: that in striving to remain friendly with both countries, regardless of the merits

[1] See pp. 112, 206, 210

of the dispute between them, she would end by finding herself the friend of neither, dropped by each for different reasons.

Muslims throughout the subcontinent, he recalled, had in general helped the Western Powers during the greatest international crisis of this century. That certainly could not be said of the Indian Congress party, which sabotaged the war-effort in the darkest days of 1942. Yet the Muslims not only now found themselves let down by the West on this most vital matter of Kashmir; they faced the ugly spectacle of their co-religionists, all the way from Morocco to Iran, having to resist repressive or unwise French or British policies. Was it surprising that, though Godless totalitarian Communism was by nature repugnant to Islam, some Muslims in disillusion had begun considering Russia as a source of aid?

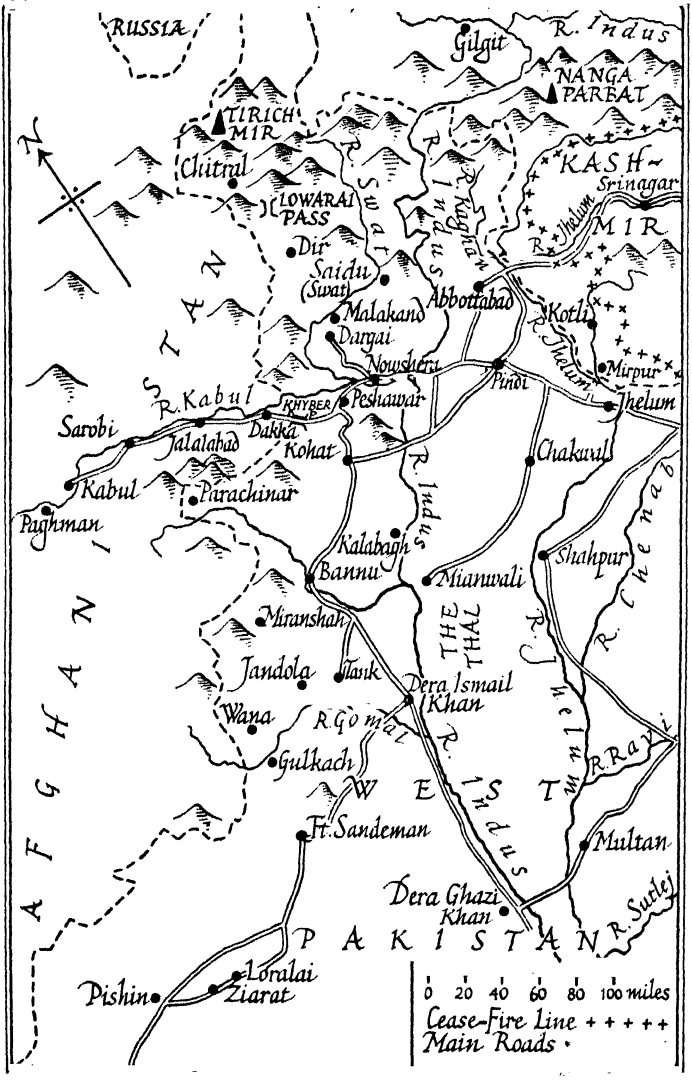
Courteous, soft-spoken, with fine-cut features and a fine presence, Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas was handsome, and perhaps Sheikh Abdullah's superior also in intellectual calibre. Whether he possessed equal force of character or powers of leadership was hard to judge, especially at a time of dejection. Each, during my talks with them, had mentioned the other respectfully, almost affectionately. Though torn apart by the bitter dispute over their country's future, they had once been friends and fellow-workers, and were too big-hearted to forget it. Each glowed with an absorbing fervour of Kashmiri patriotism. In each—though Sheikh Abdullah had reason to curb it more—was discernible an exasperated impatience with the doings of Governments and peoples other than their own. If only, I thought, these two men could be enabled to meet, beyond range of external pressures and intrigues, and decide Kashmir's future anew!

But the notion was chimerical. Matters had long ago passed beyond the scope of settlement by Kashmiris; indeed it could be questioned whether that was ever feasible. For this land of theirs, so beautiful, perhaps the loveliest in all Central Asia, uniquely gifted by nature in some ways, is in others unkindly circumstanced. Geography, though Kashmir's friend, is her enemy too. And in this modern world she holds a place on the map too interesting strategically for her destinies to be disposed of in isolation.

PART FOUR

PATHAN

MAP 2


RUSSIA
Gilgit
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NANGA PARBAT
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LOWARAI PASS
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R. Indus
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KASHMIR
Srinagar
R. Jhelum
Dir
Saidu (Swat)
Abbottabad
Kotli
Malakand
Dargai
Nowshera
Pindi
Mirpur
Jhelum
R. Kabul
KHYBER
Peshawar
Sarobi
Jalalabad
Dakka
Kohat
Chakwal
Kabul
Parachinar
Paghman
R. Indus
Kalabagh
Bannu
Mianwali
Shahpur
R. Chenab
Miranshah
THAL
R. Jhelum
Jandola
Tank
Dera Ismail Khan
Wana
R. Gomal
Gulkach
R. Indus
R. Ravi
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Main Roads

Chapter 22

PESHAWARI HOLIDAY

AT Peshawar I got a heartening welcome from the staff at Dean's hotel where I meant to idle, temporarily glutted with travel. It had housed me during many previous happy Frontier visits. Like the bigger hotels elsewhere in Northern Delkaria—at Delhi and Agra, Lahore and 'Pindi—it sprawls. Everything is of one storey. The bedrooms are semi-detached structures or separate bungalows planted about the garden. You walk from them beneath sun or stars to the dining-room and lounge.

A pleasant place, it adds a distinctive foreign spice to its nowadays strong Pakistani flavour. For through it flows a continuous thin variegated trickle of people going to Afghanistan, an undertaking which itself somehow appears to add to their oddity: Embassy officials, few in numbers but of every imaginable modern sort, brown, white or yellow, French or Turkish or Siamese, Egyptian or even Russian, with wives and servants and hangers-on; or business men and technicians, mostly American, but with a Central European element thrown in; or writers and adventurers and no doubt spies—eyeing one another curiously, all destined, when past the Afghan boundary-post at Torkham, to joggle hour after hour in excruciating discomfort over what is probably the world's worst road.

For Afghanistan possesses no railways. The air services reaching her are devious and few, and do not come this way because of her strained relations with Pakistan.[1] The usual means of getting in and out of the remote land-locked country is therefore by car to Kabul from Peshawar over the historic Khyber pass, and bone-shakingly on across the vast pebbly wilderness.

Rahim was back. As planned, he had rejoined me at Abbottabad. And when we met, to my astonishment, on the eyelids of this great granite-like block of Pathan humanity, ex-sepoy, hero of an exploit in the Waziristan campaign of 1937, father of many children, quivered tears. "I thought you wouldn't get back", he mumbled, saluting.

[1] Or did not at the time of my journey. Changes have since been reported

It was touching but absurd, for he had spent four years with me in India since Partition, crossing the border several times on his own at Lahore to resume duty after his holidays; so he knew something of conditions. But emotions in Delkaria are warm and ready; what holds them back is no thick shell of cold self-control, as in Britain, but some much brittler integument, which may break unexpectedly, in ways often charming, sometimes embarrassing—and sometimes deadly dangerous. For me, that has been one of the chief delights of living there.

And in the car between Abbottabad and Peshawar I was astonished again—and this time less congealed in my reactions. I had him beside me at the back instead of conventionally with the driver, because of his size. And as we drove, discussing what remained of my journey before I went back to England, he picked up my hand and held it. It was a gesture very un-English, very Muslim, something he had never done before—and I now felt deeply moved. My companion and employee for 14 good years, he was wordlessly emphasizing pleasure at my return from supposed peril; grief at our perhaps final severance so soon, when this journey was done.

In Peshawar the roses we had enjoyed the year before were over, for this was the end of April. They are lovely, the pride of the Frontier. Flowers mean even more to Pathans than to Europeans, partly because their country is harsh and craggy, partly perhaps because Muslim orthodoxy has banished the human form from painting and architecture, leaving floral designs as substitute, to become graced by tradition. In the spring stalwart young Pathans stroll the streets, gently fingering a new-plucked rose; or they crown the ear with one, slipping it among their bobbed locks. Or they may be seen quaffing the perfume as you would a glass of good wine. "A—ah!", they say, in simple delight.

But there were plenty of other blossoms still. By the roadside stood the elegant jacarandas, mistily blue, and at least two kinds of shrubs all a rich gold. And there were the trees whose scientific name I never remember, and whose Delkarian name varies from Province to Province, which at this season bear erect on their naked boughs, in clusters, large tubular, fleshy flowers of a piercing scarlet.

The peepul trees were just frothily breaking into leaf, ruby-

hued at first, then, when a little older, palest jade. Beneath them the ground was showered and stained with the sticky extruded sap. Already the hot weather was upon us. Brown thundery duststorms broke up the glittering blue afternoons; and as you walked across from your hotel room for lunch, the almost vertical sun struck your head-top with a torrid, ominous caress.

Paradoxically the North-West Frontier was now the stablest and most go-ahead Province of Pakistan. In British days, besides being economically and educationally backward, it was turbulent or tense always. That indeed, for the visitor, was part of the attraction.

But the contrast now was attractive too—and salutary for a British mind. Two factors had evidently caused it: Islam, and the vigorous administration of the Chief Minister, Khan Abdul Qaiyum Khan. Pathans have long been renowned not only for their independent and virile spirit—they were once an Imperial race themselves—but for Islamic fervour. Infidel British rule therefore sat uneasily on them; sometimes, as in April 1930, when an Afridi lashkar [1] broke into Peshawar from the surrounding orchards, it nearly collapsed. The tribal areas West and North of the settled districts of the Frontier Province proper had never been tamed. Personal relations between Pathans and British might be excellent; often they were. But an alien, non-Islamic Power's sway was resented, and fundamentally insecure.

The creation of Pakistan changed all that. Muslim now ruled Muslim, and tension eased. The Pathans' temperamental factionalism and violence indeed continued to cause many minor hullaballoos that you might not find elsewhere. Between Dean's hotel and the nearby Political Agent's office, a day or two after our arrival, a bloody street-battle raged among rival cliques of Mohmand tribesmen over their allowances; tonga-loads of men with split pates and gory torsos were carted off.[2] In 1948, travelling with the Frontier Constabulary near Bannu, Rahim and I saw two murders done under our eyes before the constabulary could intervene; cultivators were using grass-cutters' knives in a squabble about some abandoned Hindu land. The Frontier certainly still needs firm policing.

[1] A mobile band of war-making tribesmen

[2] Tongas are pony-traps

But with Pakistan's birth, political conditions became basically healthier. The foreign non-Islamic irritant had gone. In South Waziristan, the worst tribal area of all in British times, the scene during the 1930's of almost continual affrays involving heavy casualties, the Scouts[1] had not been involved for nearly five years in any skirmish except against simple robbers.

When I first met Khan Abdul Qaiyum, in Delhi in 1943, he was a member of the Indian Congress party and its Deputy Leader in the Central Legislature. He went over to the Muslim League two years later. Other Muslim politicians at that period were doing likewise—Sheikh Abdullah being a major exception.

Three reasons in his case could be surmised. First—so he later told me—he had seen through the professed "secular" fairness in most Hindu Congressmen; they were in reality, he found, communal and anti-Muslim. The second, probably, was resentment at being curbed or overshadowed by the leading Congressman of the Frontier, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. And the third, I should guess, was sheer hard-headed political prescience. Wanting power, conscious of his abilities, and looking ahead, he decided in good time that the Islamic and Pakistani influence on the Frontier would win, and jumped accordingly.

He was now one of the strongest and most respected Muslim leaders in Pakistan, a possible future Prime Minister of the country, and architect of developments in his Province which few could have foreseen, and which had put it in some ways well ahead of Pakistan's other three: East Bengal, West Punjab, and Sind. He had many enemies, both within the country and in India and Afghanistan. His methods of government and electioneering were at times criticized as ruthless and unprincipled, even by his friends. But he was efficient, self-confident and bold: probably the right qualities for administering territory such as this in these times.

During our talk on April 27 I found him more direct and practical than ever. Of bulky physique, he carries his weight well, and seemed full of energy.

What mattered for the Frontier, he emphasized—as indeed for Pakistan—was material advance: more food and cloth, industries and electricity, education, medical aid. The strong are heeded. It was natural for the Great Powers at present to favour India. When Pakistan got stronger she would be noticed more. She should

[1] See pp. 150, 151

concentrate on her own development. Frittering away energy on ethereal projects such as fostering an Islamic bloc was foolish. A powerful Pakistan, if she wished, could become leader of the Islamic nations in the ordinary course. At present they seemed incapable of cohesion anyway.

His own Province, in less than five years, had made great economic strides—more than during decades of British rule, I might please note: in electrification, for example, which now extended even to the tribal villages. No doubt I had seen the grids. At Dargai, under the Malakand Pass, the new hydro-electric project supplementing that at Jabban was well advanced; a vastly bigger one, where the Kabul river emerged from its gorge at Warsak, would follow. The Mardan sugar factory was the biggest in Asia. Many new industrial ventures were springing up: tanneries, mills for spinning cotton and woollen worsteds, fruit-canning factories, others for making tobacco, paper-board, caustic soda, starch, medicines, perfumery and so forth.

There were many more schools, primary and secondary, particularly in the tribal areas, where a strong educational demand had arisen. The tribesmen were shrewd; wealth and strength means everything to them, and they had grasped that schooling nowadays gets these things.

The Islamia College on the Khyber road was being much enlarged; it had now become the core of the new Peshawar University. There and in the schools the curricula he hoped would have practical bias, concentrating on such subjects as mechanical engineering, medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry. Producing more clerks and literary gentlemen was bad policy; there were too many now.

It was by material strength, not by sentiment or slogans, that power was won and held, whether by Governments or peoples. Religion was good in its place. But the mullahs must not butt into politics [1]; on the Frontier he had arranged that they did not.

In Peshawar, as I might have foreseen, I soon got enmeshed in "Pakhtoonistan." Here was a fascinating political topic, a Central Asian intrigue of the finest quality, opening up almost limitless possibilities for speculation—but leaving less scope for idling than I had planned.

[1] See pp. 63, 64

Khan Abdul Qaiyum mentioned it during our talk. So did the Governor, Khwaja Shahabuddin—brother of Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Pakistani Prime Minister—when I lunched in his panelled dining-room soon after, under the armorials of famous British Governors such as Sir George Roos-Keppel and Sir George Cunningham. So did the little Chinese cobbler who fitted me for shoes. So did the District Commander, General Haji Iftikhar Ahmad; the Inspector-General of the Frontier Corps, Colonel Rahim; city merchants whom I knew; teachers at the Islamia College. My Rahim did too.

To most Western eyes "Pakhtoonistan" is gibberish. The term first got about in 1946, publicized by the "Frontier Gandhi" Khan Abdul Ghaffar and his Red Shirt party, an offshoot of the Indian Congress. It had now become the essence of Afghan propaganda against Pakistan. Its curious evolution needs explaining.

Literally the word means the land of the Pakhtoons or Pathans, the speakers of Pashtu or Pakhtu, about seven million of whom inhabit the North-West Frontier. The remaining four million or so inhabit Afghanistan, which, like ancient Gaul or modern Switzerland, is a country divided into three parts: an Uzbeg or Tajjik part to the North, a Persian part to the West, and this Pathan part to the South. The Afghan Royal House, largely Persian by culture, is Pathan by race.

In publicizing the word, Khan Abdul Ghaffar steered clear of its then delicate Afghan aspect. On Red Shirt lips "Pakhtoonistan" signified an agitation or demand for the independence of the Pathans of the North-West Frontier—independence, that is, from Pakistan, should such a State come into being.

But before she did, the Red Shirts were a spent force. As I had seen during a Frontier visit in May 1947, they had been much shaken by the civil disobedience movement waged against them by their rivals the Muslim League, in imitation of their own earlier movements against the British. Their avowed link with the Congress party and the Hindus, at a time of ferocious communal rioting all across the plains of Northern Delkaria, proved unsustainable. Reports of frightful outrages against Muslims by Hindus and Sikhs down-country kept pouring in. Faced with such alternatives, Pathans favoured Islam and Pakistan. The referendum in the Frontier Province in July 1947 decided the matter. Soon the Red Shirt Cabinet of Dr Khan Sahib, brother of Khan

Abdul Ghaffar, was driven from office; and next year Khan Abdul Ghaffar was jailed.

From the moment of the Red Shirts' loss of power, the Afghans took over the "Pakhtoonistan" clamour. In September 1947, alone among 57 nations, they opposed Pakistan's entry to the U.N.; and thereafter they maintained continuous hostile propaganda, in which the demand for Pakhtoon or Pathan independence was the keynote.

What they meant by this, however, wobbled in accordance with Kabul's political moods. The Pathans of Pakistan declared that Pakistan was independent already, themselves being part of her. At one time the Afghan demand appeared no more than that the Pakistani Government should change the Frontier Province's name to Pakhtoonistan. At others it has been blatantly annexationist. While I was on my journey, for example, the Afghan Ambassador in Cairo was reported as saying that "Pakhtoonistan" meant cession to Afghanistan of large tracts of territory stretching from high Central Asia to the Arabian Sea.

The unpleasant aspect of the affair lay in this. Pakistanis were convinced that Afghanistan's policy was instigated by India, that she had been inveigled into it not only by diplomatic suasion but by cash. It was essentially an offshoot, they contended, of the much bigger Indo-Pakistani disputes, particularly about Kashmir, and was therefore dishonest. For how else could it be explained?

Afghanistan, they pointed out, was weak and backward, a country of about 12 million people as against Pakistan's 76 millions. Her annual revenue was less than half Pakistan's annual outlay in the Frontier Province and the tribal areas alone. She was far from being democratic, as suggested by her Indian sympathizers; like Nepal—until India subverted its independence for democracy's sake in 1950-51—she was a mediaeval autocracy, arbitrarily run, whose important Government posts at home and abroad were held by the King's relatives.

There could be no comparison between the two countries militarily. By Asian standards Pakistan's Armed Forces were first-class, surpassed only by those of China and India. Further, she had excellent communications towards and along the border by rail or road. Afghanistan's communications were comic; and her very inadequate revenues, apart from readily ascertainable facts, made clear that her Forces must be feeble and ill-equipped.

In the last resort moreover she was dependent on Pakistani goodwill for her foreign supplies, since her outlet to the sea at Karachi, via the road over the Khyber, was for geographical reasons the one that mainly mattered.

In Pakistani estimation, Afghanistan could be conquered and its Pathan part freed in a few weeks by about a third of the Frontier Corps, without the Pakistani Army having to function. There would be no fanatical religious resistance, such as thwarted the British. But such action, in the world's present state, might cause a general disaster. Afghanistan's disintegration would doubtless bring Russia forward at least as far as the Hindukush mountains, with diplomatic and strategic results difficult to predict. And even should no great war ensue, Pakistan would acquire Russia as neighbour, a distasteful prospect.

Equally cogent perhaps was a further reflection. Military action by Pakistan might call forth a stab in the back from India, whose well-placed armoured division was a standing menace to Lahore. India and Afghanistan professedly were close friends. Leading Afghan personages had often visited Delhi and been received with much honour. Any opportunity gratuitously offered to India for an offensive might be grasped eagerly.

This, in essence, was the Pakistani opinion about "Pakhtoonistan." I heard it repeatedly in Peshawar, the Pathans' or Pakhtoons' biggest city—presumably the capital-designate of any Pakhtoonistan yet to be born. I had heard echoes of it earlier in Karachi and elsewhere—which made it the more necessary that, before leaving for England, I should cross the frontier and hear something also of what the Afghans and the foreign diplomats in Kabul had to say. Much of my remaining time in Peshawar, therefore, was spent—as at 'Pindi—upon hard chairs imbibing unnecessary tea in Government offices of various kinds, Pakistani and Afghan and now also British, making applications for travel-permits.

And this time there was a further complication. Not only did I aspire to visiting Kabul myself; I was bent on taking Rahim, for our remaining days together were sadly few. Englishman and Pakistani, we would tread Afghan soil together or not at all.

Chapter 23

UNDER THE MALAKAND

WHILE the bureaucrats of three nations in Peshawar, and their counterparts no doubt in Kabul, unravelled this teaser—which I was told might take some time—there were three pleasant hilly expeditions to make: North to the Malakand, South to Waziristan, West to the Khyber.

The way to the Malakand runs close to Mohmand country on the left, with Rahim's country of the Utman Khel and Sam Ramzai Yusufzais on the right, but the tribesmen to be stayed with would be Mahsuds, my rescuers from abdominal and political mishap in 1948, and in 1951 hosts to my adventurous Hindu motor-driver Raghu Raj.[1] Road-makers near Chitral in the former year, they had since been electricity-makers, engaged on excavations for the Dargai project which Khan Abdul Qaiyum had enthusiastically described.

Loosely enrolled in a labour battalion, they lived in the romantic little fort at Dargai, about a mile from the hydro-electric undertaking, and were under military discipline—but unarmed. Mahsuds are indeed recruited to the Pakistani combatant units, where, mixed with Pathans of other tribes, they do excellently. But the notion of nothing but Mahsuds, of Mahsuds en masse armed and trained, frightens even the Pakistani Government. Occasions are recalled when the British tried it, with peculiar results. The most volatile, lethal, unscrupulous, intelligent and travel-lusting species of Pathan, Mahsuds in those days found collective possession of first-class weapons altogether too tempting and usually mutinied or just rushed off, causing understandable consternation.

Dargai lies beneath big, barren hills. These are traversed by the Malakand pass, less famous than the Khyber, but historically almost as important; it leads one way to Dir and Chitral, and another to Swat, a fascinating principality and home of different friends of mine—the new Wali or Ruler and his admirable

[1] See pp. 20, 133

young son Shahzada Aurangzeb, whom I had recently met again at 'Pindi.

As we drove towards Dargai from Peshawar and Nowshera over flat country, the hills had been strips of jagged mauve cardboard propped at the horizon's rim, not quite real. Then suddenly, with some change in the light, they became solid. It was now high summer by British standards on the plains—and hot at that. The wheat was cut; shaggy stacks of it dotted the stubbly fields. Yet it was spring too. Birds were nesting, trees were bright with new leaf; and here, where the ground rose towards the hills, the monotony of boulders and brown scrub was disrupted by the flame-of-the-forest, flowering like a red explosion.

Among the assembled faces as we drove through the fort's gateway were some that I recognized, and I was struck afresh by Mahsuds' extraordinary variety of countenance: interesting faces all, hard and lean; some so handsome that you could hardly believe it, catching your breath; others amusingly ugly; others again diabolical, apparently incarnations of scheming, pitiless evil.

That evening, as sunlight cast oblique shadows on the hills, our hosts gave us a dance: not quite so perfect, perhaps, as that beside their encampment on the Chitral road had been in 1948; or my mood, in a healthy, undepleted body, was this time less delicately receptive. But a very wonderful, bloodstirring dance nonetheless, worth travelling far to see.

In true Mahsud style it began all anyhow. Young men ambled on to the dance-arena of beaten earth in twos and threes, clad according to individual untidy fancy—very different from the systematized attire which I was to see not long afterwards among Pathan sepoys at Wana and Landikotal. Some wore sashes or scarves, white or coloured, others not. The long out-hanging shirts and the partouks—wide baggy cloth trousers that Pathans use—were of various hues also: mazri-grey,[1] blue, white, khaki. Bored or seemingly reluctant, the would-be dancers collected in a disorderly circle, and as the drummer [2] began half-heartedly thumping, made tentative forward and backward steps.

[1] The mazri-dye, derived from a cactus-like plant, is much favoured by tribal Pathans, since its tint harmonizes with the grey stoniness of the landscape.

[2] Mahsuds disdain supplementary pipe-music, employed by some other Pathans in dances. They dance to drum alone.

PLATE XI. A picture of military efficiency—but a flower decks his bobbed hair: Mahsud at Dargai fort

"Why, they look plumb silly!", I once heard a distinguished foreign guest exclaim in vexed disappointment, on watching the opening phase of a much more disciplined Pathan dance than this, done by Khattaks.

Then, this evening, as the circle shaped up and the men sidled and the tempo slowly grew, fire suddenly ran among them, flickered between them and the drummer at the centre, spread to the spectators. You could feel it, no one of spirit could fail to. It originated nowhere, not from the drummer, nor any leader of the circle; a spontaneous combustion had happened, the necessary spark without which Pathan dancing is no more than rough, vigorous movement. And as the swirling, shouting, head-swaying men went round, faster and faster, the flame of their excitement fused us all in an absorbed, barbaric, passionate unity.

Convention-bound on these occasions to your chair, you feel your feet and hands vibrant, you can hardly keep still, you must forthwith join this wild, glorious, virile throng; you restrain yourself with a struggle. But though inexperience and propriety may debar a British spectator from participating, you can at least organize and intensify your sedentary watchful pleasure in various ways.

One, perhaps the least easy, is to try to comprehend with eye and ear the entire dance, disregarding individual dancers. Circling, the lithe forms bend and sway, gently, violently, in abrupt alternations. In them all are deep reserves of wiry strength; intense vitality stirs under partial control. From lowered heads in line the black bobbed masses of oiled, straight hair fall loose. Rhythmically, downwards and sideways they swing and jerk, to throb of drum, to stamp or shuffle of feet and stir of dust. Then, with a flick, the heads rise, the tresses slap back into neat place. A tiny pause; you have watched a row of long-stalked boyish flowers, tossing black petals in a breeze of drum-beats.

Another way is to concentrate on particular bodies. To observe each as it swings into view before you; to taste the beauty of its movements; then to accept the next as it arrives, contrasting it. Or you can choose one body which pleases, following its gyrations all the way round with entranced if sometimes tardy or defeated eye.

Near the end, this evening, I found myself engaged in the last method, having selected a piece of special Mahsud flame, a lean,

flickering figure of conspicuous grace, black-sashed, otherwise all in white, long of arm, youthful, hawk-nosed—and then, startled, I recognized him. I was admiring my own Gulmar Khan, daily companion of our recent journey from Karachi to 'Pindi, now transformed, a thing of fire and wonder.

Tribal Pathans are carnivors. Living with them, you find yourself devouring much flesh, and busy, in the intervals, extricating shreds of trapped meat from among your hard-worked teeth. In part, this meaty diet is from choice; in part, a result of these Pathans' environment, so stony and arid that crops are thin, vegetables and fruit rare, dairy-products poor; and perforce they resort to sheep-eating.

I enjoyed a delicious fleshy repast that evening after the dance, a tribal meal given by my friend Hashem Khan [1] and his senior colleague Mir Badshah, Mahsuds of leading families—chieftains they might be called.

First came a course of roast sheep's ribs, with roast liver, masses of it, very succulent. A sheep's haunch followed, softly boiled, beautiful. After that arrived sliced meat lumps, set amidst bright spiced yellow rice laced with raisins, nuts, herbs, and a side-accompaniment of onion and potato. There had probably been enough meat, between the three of us, to satisfy a modern British household for a month. The final, non-carnivorous course was a pink blancmange, all being washed down by the distinctive Pathan drink, milkless green tea or cawa, flavoured with cardomom.

Gulmar Khan called me next morning; Rahim must have overslept. It was pleasant to see him—an ordinary human being again, no longer a streak of fire; and we had news to exchange of our doings since parting at 'Pindi.

"Hashem says you're going to Waziristan after this", he stated.

"Yes."

"I'll come too, please."

Here was a puzzle. Rahim's feelings must not be hurt, and the domestic combination of two mutually distrustful Pathans had been awkward, even alarming before.

"Why, Gulmar?"

[1] See p. 51

"To see that you're safe, of course. And I know lots of people, big men, Sahib, maliks to introduce you to. And Wana is very nice, Sahib."

"Yes, I've been there."

I reflected. Gulmar could certainly help with introductions; he was well connected. Waziristan was not Rahim's country. Then came an idea.

"How far is your village from Wana, Gulmar?"

"Fifteen miles, Sahib. And they've started a bus." He looked at me eagerly. "Just two nights, Sahib", with a twinkle. "Then I'd be back in Wana again."

So that was it. Seventeen-year-old Gulmar, just before meeting me at Karachi, had been married.

And on this hard-headed basis we agreed upon it—subject to Rahim's approval. Gulmar would exploit me to get to his home in the far South, about 400 miles away; and I, except for his 48 hours, would exploit him as my political aide.

Later that morning we set off to see his fellow-Mahsuds' hydro-electric labours. Water from the Swat river on the North side of the Malakand pass, brought by tunnel under it, already served the older Jabban installation further up the valley, and an additional channel, a big one which wriggled along the valley-flank, now reached as far as Dargai, where the water would rush down a four-piped electrical "fall." The Mahsuds' task had been to excavate this new channel and the "fall"; most of the job was now done. Contractors' men had followed them, cementing the surface; and below, at the base of the "fall", more men were putting up the power-house.

It was hot work, there under an almost vertical sun on the arid hillside—and dangerous too. Only the evening before, a mass of rock, which could have killed scores, collapsed close to where they had stood.

Many of these tribesmen wore goggles as safeguard against stone-splinters. They were pick-axing, delving with iron levers, hammering, shovelling—using the Asian two-man shovel—or carrying off rock and earth in triangular tip-cars on rails, or on two-man cradles or rope-stretchers. They toiled with energy, and their practical minds showed lively interest in the benefits which would result.

"We need such things much in Waziristan", said one. "It's our

misfortune that the streams there are weak and do not run well."

Rahim, after a moment's puzzled pause, made no objection to Gulmar coming to Waziristan with us. Indeed, he seemed pleased; and I thought I saw why, reading his mind with the confidence of 14-years' propinquity.

We were due today to stop at his village for an hour or so, taking a more devious route back to Peshawar for this purpose. And as we bumped along the rough track by the canal bank—through fine Italian-looking country, full of brightness and steep little hills, outlined against a blue background of much bigger ones—he began, by oblique conversational moves, to broach the topic on his mind.

"Cut it out, you old fool."

He turned, startled and indignant.

"Now that Gulmar's back, and can look after me, you're going to ask whether you can stay at home for a night or two. Now aren't you?"

He smiled.

"That's agreed, then." And on this happy basis our visit opened auspiciously.

His house stood away from the others of the village, within a small walled enclosure where a buffalo-cow could be kept: three rooms, one fairly large, with an outhouse added since my last visit; a pleasant home, but, owing to the structure of the roof, an inferno of heat in summer.

Though I had implored him not to incur expense, a contrary message had evidently been sent and lavish preparations awaited us. Pathan hospitality is incorrigibly generous, however poor the host. On the big family charpoi or string-bed in the living-room lay spread the flashy silk quilt which I remembered him buying in Calcutta, and on this, as guest of honour, I was invited to sit. Other string-beds had been carried in, on which relatives and visitors seated themselves, politely conversing. Wide-eyed village children from the road peered in, trespassing, and were brusquely ordered off. Rahim put a garland of roses round my neck; others, sweet-scented, hung on the wall. And with pleasure I noticed there also, proudly displayed, the rifle I had given him in gratitude for long service, and a framed photograph of myself nearby.

PLATE 27

Mahsuds working on the Khaisora hydro-electric project at Dargai. Reflecting the tribe's new and friendly acti-

PLATE 28. Rahim's little daughter, at her village; now five years old

Food was brought, far too much. Little Akhtari, the daughter born in my Calcutta flat during the riots, came up, coy but friendly, wearing a garland of roses also, to offer sweets; and on the floor crawled two smaller children, sons, one with his father's chin-cleft in miniature.

As village convention required, Rahim's wife remained invisible. I caught only a partial fluttering glimpse of a burqa-clad form. We were acquainted, however. When she inhabited my Calcutta flat for the baby's birth, though veiled, she had treated me almost as a member of the family; and once, when the unpunctual Rahim had overslept again, she had even, head averted, brought me morning tea.

Chapter 24

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN

THE religious calendar of Islam works backward through the year, changing position a little each time, for it is fixed to the moon's phases. An annual festival which falls in October will next fall in or near September, and so on. Rahim and Gulmar and I, and our Mahsud hosts under the Malakand, and our friends at Peshawar—the table-servants at Dean's, the Scouts' officers[1] in the big Fort, the tribal riff-raff in the bazaar, the bulky Chief Minister—indeed everyone on the Frontier, and in Pakistan, had become alert to this fact lately, because the new moon, just as the hot weather was beginning in the last days of April, had announced the approach of the Muslims' annual ordeal. Horned and beautiful, it lay on its back above a jagged skyline, emphasizing to the faithful that next month would be Ramazan.

Devout Christians also fast once a year, by which they usually mean replacing one good protein by another; red flesh by paler fish. Ramazan is different—and in a new-made Islamic State is more closely observed than in the old undivided India. From dawn to sunset for 28 or perhaps 29 days no food or liquid must pass the faster's lips.

Once, living among Muslims at this grim time, I tried joining them. You get hungry towards evening. And probably you sleep badly. About midnight uneasy awareness that supper was insufficient rouses you; you take a snack and gulp some water. Later perhaps you wake merely from fear of oversleeping, or because others are moving about; for if you fail to take breakfast before sunrise you cannot breakfast at all.

But these things were endurable. Much the hardest part, at any rate in hot climates, is the deprivation of liquid. What stopped my comradely experiment was simply the afternoon thirst. And that was years ago, when Ramazan fell in October, and each day's abstention lasted less than twelve hours. Now, in May 1952, there would be nearly sixteen drinkless, foodless hours—in dry burning winds and plains-temperatures well over 100°.

[1] Officers of the Frontier Corps headquarters. See pp. 150, 151

"You won't find us quite at our best soon", explained my companion of the South Waziristan Scouts as we set forth one May dawn for Wana. He was aware only that I might be in Waziristan some while—for the halt at Peshawar had shown little progress yet with the matter of the Afghan permits. "Of course we welcome guests during Ramazan. But there's not much going on. And the men get a bit drowsy and irritable in the afternoons."

"I know; I've seen it. But I'll probably have gone. I'm due to leave for England in June."

"I wish I could!"

Wana is about 300 miles from Peshawar. The road, winding, traverses much rocky, tribal country. The only straight bits are across the cultivated plains of Kohat, Bannu and Tank. The intervening bits are wild and barren, and the hills towards the end very wild indeed. Dashing young Scouts' officers in their own cars may do the trip in a day, but normally it takes two, owing to the hills and curves.

And this time, both ways, I was to travel with convoys of Scouts' lorries, carrying troops or stores. Though slower, it added to the journey's variety. When bored sitting within, amidst the engine-fumes, you could risk sunstroke on the roof, enjoying the view and the fresh air among the railed-in bags and bedding-rolls; or you could stand or squat with the swaying men in one of the open vehicles at the convoy's dusty tail.

Muslim troops are pleasant to travel with, as companionable as British but finer-mannered, very solicitous always for a guest. Another notable contrast, particularly in the case of Pathans, is their extreme modest unobtrusiveness about calls to nature at the halts. Bedouin Arabs are similar—or so I thought when once on a desert journey with Glubb's Arab Legion.

Such things deserve mention, for some Westerners assume that, because Asians' standards of material civilization are lower, because they are poor and their streets dirty, they are probably dirty in person too, even lacking in the decencies. This is far from so, as indicated earlier in this book.[1] And Westerners on their part may not know that certain Western habits shock and disgust Asians: public love-making for instance. A kiss is scarcely

[1] See pp. 37, 73, 74

ever seen on Delkarian films. I reflected, too, that nearly all the Pathans I was with today would have recently shaved the sweatier parts of their bodies; the notion of armpits unshaven for more than a fortnight, particularly in the hot weather, would revolt the average Muslim. And before prayer—Muslims pray often—these men would usually be scrupulous in washing not only hands, but feet and mouth and other parts as well.

The road, traversing the Bannu plain, was bordered by date-palms. This short stretch is rich and fertile. On the fields, villagers were threshing and winnowing new-cut wheat. Oxen driven in circles plodded over the sheaves to thresh them; then men brusquely forked the threshed matter high into the air. The resulting golden jerky showers of falling grain and separated chaff, wind-blown puffs like tiny bomb-bursts, dotted the countryside, a characteristic sight in May all along the Frontier. Characteristic of these fertile parts, too, was the strong hot smell of blossoming lucerne.

But most of the way lay twistily through arid jumbled rock or tracts of sand. In the flat country beyond Bannu the afternoon air over the dunes shimmered and bent with the heat. Sometimes there were mirages. An unusually perfect one showed a great blue lake, with distant thorn trees reflecting themselves full-length in the quivering semblance of water.

Approached at evening, after you have passed Tank, South Waziristan is spectacular—more so, I think, than the Khyber. The scale is vast; everything appears harsh and bare. Toothy crags bite the pale sky. Centrally stands a conspicuous peak; two precipices fall away near its summit, and its flank, high up, is notched as if from a sword-cut.

By the road Kuchi nomads were untidily camped in their hairy tents, surrounded with camels and donkeys, children and dogs, goats and sheep and poultry. Every spring, when the plains get hot and pasture dries, these people migrate to the uplands. Cooking-fires glowed after their day's trudge, and there were friendly shouts as we passed.

There came shouts, too, and eager questions from the men assembled to watch our convoy on the battlements of the Frontier Constabulary fort at Kaur. As we went on in the dusk towards Manzai and Jandola a small dry thunderstorm blinked from the southward hills. I felt drowsy, sagging against the bedding-rolls

on the roof. It had been a long day's drive, hot and dusty, more than 12 hours already.

At the front of our vehicle, on the roof by himself, crouched a Scouts sepoy, his turbaned head silhouetted against the tilting stars. His hand grasped a rifle; at his waist the metal of the bayonet-sheath reflected an occasional lightning flash; over chest and shoulder was outlined a bandolier; he gripped his turban-tail by his teeth to prevent it flapping, but behind him his out-hanging Pathan shirt of grey mazri blew vigorously in the lorry-made breeze.

We spent an airless night at Jandola; although within the Waziristan hills, its height is only about 2,200 ft. In British days it had been the S.W.S.'s headquarters; now its importance was secondary. Headquarters had moved up to Wana, formerly a big Army camp, climatically pleasanter, because much higher and breezier—and much deeper within Waziristan.

As mentioned earlier,[1] soon after Pakistan was born her Government decided to pull the Army out of the tribal areas on the Frontier altogether. Maintenance of order was left to an enlarged Frontier Corps—which is recruited wholly from Pathans—supported by the loosely-organized levies called khassadars. It was a bold—some thought rash—stroke of policy. Reasons were several: the Pakistani Army required complete reorganizing after being unpicked from the old Army of undivided India; attack was feared from the new India, this necessitating stronger defences in the Punjab; and the Army in the old days had proved curiously ineffective and very costly on the Frontier anyway.

But a bigger reason lay behind. The decision was ultimately of Faith. The tribes, Pakistanis believed, would show themselves friendlier to an Islamic State than they had to the old British Raj. A calculated political risk was taken, based on religion. And although the prolonged differences with neighbouring Afghanistan were then quite unforeseen, the risk had certainly justified itself—as I had seen for myself during extensive Frontier wanderings between Chitral and Pishin in 1948 and 1951. Only one modification had been made to meet Afghan antagonism: a small force drawn from the Pakistani Army was put at Landikotal to support the Khyber Rifles (a Frontier Corps unit).

[1] See pp. 150, 151

For about five years now the Frontier had enjoyed, in general, a peace unknown latterly in British days. Nothing like the battles or planned operations of those times had happened. Occasional disorder of political origin had occurred in the Tochi (North Waziristan) and Khyber areas. Elsewhere, except for camel-raising raids, minor banditries of the traditional kind, and a few affrays with Afghan troops or auxiliaries on the border itself, calm had reigned. The Islamic factor had so far worked.

An episode during my journey in 1951 threw interesting light on the attitude of local Pakistani officialdom towards the risks of border-trouble. I was then in the Khurram, a tongue of tribal territory which projects towards Afghanistan between the Khyber and the Tochi, and was out gushting with the local Frontier Corps unit, the Khurram Militia. Gushts are lightly-armed foot-patrols, which often traverse very rough hilly ground under the fierce sun.

This one, because of the visitor present, was an easy affair. Nevertheless, most of our march that morning went within a few hundred yards of Afghan territory, and I thought: how annoying for my hosts, what agitated signalling, what piles of correspondence, were I shot or kidnapped. For I was then still Editor of "The Statesman", holding a job therefore in the new India, but travelling on a British passport, and in Pakistani charge. In fact I embodied the makings of a very tiresome little international incident; and affrays did undeniably sometimes occur.

On returning that evening to the Mess at Parachinar I mentioned what had been in my mind. My hosts laughed. Yes, the idea had occurred to them too: they had discussed it; the Political Agent had even been spoken to. Certainly the official fuss had I been lost would have been considerable—apart from the disgrace and personal regrets.

"But we've got things pretty well buttoned up here, as you can see", concluded the commandant. "There really wasn't a risk worth the name."

The five-hours' drive from Jandola up to Wana was as impressive as ever, through an angular, brutal landscape of jumbled rock, rich in blood-soaked history. Above the road stood the fortified posts which, in the 1930's, had been headlined in the Press because of the savage hill-fighting around them: Chagmalai,

PLATE 29. Travelling with the troops in a Scouts' convoy: one of my lorry-made friends

PLATE 30. In a fortified tribal hamlet, South Waziristan: housewife carrying water-vessel

Splitoi, Sarwakai, Tanai. We went through the dreaded defile called Shahur Tangi, then a convoy-trap, where shockingly many brave men died, Muslim and Christian, Hindu and Sikh. Yet now, in Pakistani care, one infidel in a supposedly fanatic-filled country, I saw it not from behind armour-plate, but unreproved from a lorry roof-top, any sniper's easy target.

This region is partly Wazir, partly Mahsud. Men of the two tribes can probably be distinguished by an expert. He will tell you, for instance, that Wazirs like wearing oblongs of crude jewellery containing talismans on their shirts or waistcoats; and that Mahsuds think this vulgar, keeping their talismans, if any, on necklets next the skin. But a quick glance may find differentiation hard. Neither tribe uses the kulla—the stiff skull-cap, usually decorated with gold thread, which forms the basis of most Muslim turbans. Instead, they bundle their turbans untidily direct on the head, and often choose black, not pale-blue or brown, the commoner Pathan colours elsewhere. This black cloth heaped above the black bobbed locks gives the men a sinister conspiratorial appearance as they idle by the roadside, hawk-faced, spitting, grasping rifles, glancing hard-eyed at the convoy.

The women, if not in black too, wear various shades of rusty red. As we passed, few of them bothered to drape their faces, which, if not young, were as hard and hawk-like as the men's. Most of them walked barefoot. Their skirts and bodices swung gracefully along the road, or the little stony pathways by the fields of sparse wind-sprawled wheat, as yet unripe on these uplands.

Nearing Wana, we saw three distant horsemen on a vast pebbly wilderness. And they, seeing us, and wanting to investigate, spurred their steeds, leaning eagerly in the saddles, rifles slung behind. The horses were beautiful animals, and decked unexpectedly with flashy head-trappings, pompons and tassels of coloured wool. The rifles bore tassels too.

Then, straggling across the road, other figures appeared—an assemblage of guests for a Mahsud wedding. Signs of special finery showed in the women's clothes, and someone, doubtless the bridegroom, rode a caparisoned camel, rocking laboriously back and forth with its ship-like movements. The gay, festive spectacle drew excited shouts and laughter from our convoy.

Changes at Wana since the old days seemed few. The Scouts used only about a third of the big former British camp; the rest lay empty, but in fair repair. I was housed at the Mess. Though the last British officer had gone some while ago, the traditions stayed. Various Mess treasures had been brought up from Jandola, pieces of presentation silver inscribed with the donors' names; a heavily-humorous S.W.S. crest headed "Wany, Weedy, Weaky"; and pictures of aquatic scenes—a Scottish sea-loch, a sailing-vessel tossed in big waves, duck alighting on a pool—suggesting the subconscious yearning for water of exiled islanders stationed here in the Asian land-mass years ago.

Meals were usually Pakistani curries, but British food could be got. At table the smaller plate tended to shift to the right of the cutlery, for Muslims eat bread right-handedly. The tumbler, similarly, might deviate leftwards. Liquor was kept and hospitably offered to a foreign visitor—but not pressed on him. That spared me an embarrassment, for over-lavish offerings of spirits or beer in the old days were sometimes perplexing. My hosts, as good Muslims, did not drink.

British officers, I believe, never brought their wives to Wana. The only British ladies who to my knowledge stayed there—after 1947—were three missionary workers in the little hospital. But Pakistani wives and families were now established. Indeed, although Kabul Radio had recently made Wana the scene of a battle with "Pakhtoon" forces in which the Scouts suffered over 200 casualties, it was in fact a tranquil and unwontedly domestic little hill-station.

The Islamic atmosphere was strong. On the Mess lawn at sundown, sipping lemonade with a group of officers, I half-noticed the commandant, Colonel Abdul Jabar, a keen gardener, stroll off among the larkspur and petunia beds. After a while something moved. Alone in a corner, his feet shoeless, a silk handkerchief over his head, he was prostrating himself towards Mecca.

Before dawn one day I set off on an expedition with one of the captains in his car, an open tourer, followed by lorry-borne troops. We soon outdistanced them; but as the sun rose he pulled up and got out. Map on knee, studying the landscape, I paid no heed, when, startled, I realized that he stood nearby at the roadside before a little shrine, hands shoulder-high, palms upward in the beautiful Muslim gesture of supplication. It was no formal

PLATE XII. This Wazir lad, my guard for a day near Wana, was "perfect at protective colouring"

prayer; just a word to God at daybreak for happy times on our journey. The episode's unselfconscious simplicity charmed me. It could scarcely have happened in the old days—nor, probably, would I have been in an open car with no armed orderly, far ahead of the troops.

While at Wana I covered some of the surrounding landscape on foot, suitably escorted. On one such walk, I had as an armed protector a hard, unsmiling 15-year-old, whom I photographed during a halt. Brown-skinned, grey-clad, motionless, he was almost invisible on the great stony waste, melting into his environment, as perfect at protective colouring as an animal.[1]

Everything behind him was motionless too, empty and barren except, far off, the tiny movement of a flock of goats—and the heated air itself, rippling like water. Then over the skyline, but parted from it by an intervening thin stratum of pale trembling blue, there appeared a procession of tall camels, slow, swaying, roped in single file but apparently as yet unled, treading on nothingness. Then the man leading them, lower, also rose into view.

On May 12 I did a routine gusht with the S.W.S. to a pass called the Inzar Narai, which leads from Wazir to Mahsud territory; thence we traversed a hill-face for some miles, returning by another route across the Wana plain. Because of the midday dazzle we started at 4 a.m.: two officers, myself, and about 160 men equipped with automatic weapons, rifles, heliograph, a walkie-talkie, and carrier pigeons. The first pallor of dawn was then outlining the Eastward hills. No sun however reached us till 6.30, for by daybreak we were already well in the gully that rises to the pass.

Setting forth over the dim plain in waning moonlight had been pleasant and cool. The men soon fanned out, surprisingly few of our considerable grey-clad party being then discernible. After a while, in a fold of ground, we came upon a camp of Kuchi nomads just awakening. Dogs barked, new-made fires glowed, questions and greetings came faintly and were replied to. As the tilt of the land brought us towards the gully-entrance, grasses and scrub got less sparse, then small junipers appeared. On our right a 7,000-ft. hilltop carried a sprinkling of pines.

During our nine-hours' march that day we made four halts—

[1] Reproduced on Plate XII

to enable the rear platoon to catch up, or for tactical redispositions, signals, food, and discreet calls to nature, performed not standing but squatting always. From the lip of the pass we looked down past a grim little khassadar post into the Mahsud country. Young Gulmar would be over there now, enjoying his 48 hours.

The subsequent scramble along the hill-face under rapidly mounting sunshine bothered me, a civilian desk-worker nearing 50; often the steep slope was all loose angular stones, which slid or collapsed when stepped on. Upward pulls on the unsure footholds sometimes knocked my breath out. There was also much thorn; a sort of holly scraped the bare arms, fingers clutched camel-scrub, spiky knee-high bushes menaced the calves. For all of us the last third of the expedition, down a dry watercourse and across the boulder-strewn plain towards Wana, was rather an ordeal because of the now nearly vertical sun. The body's desiccation by heat and dazzle and the strong drying wind on the Pathan hills can be extraordinary; and our water-bottles had mostly been emptied long ago.

Not having previously gushted so near midsummer I did not do badly however. I noted my liquid-intake after reaching Wana: in 1½ hours, nine eager tumblerfuls of well-salted water. As I had worn nothing but a Chitrali cap, thinner protection than my Pathan companions' turbans, I ought by Edwardian medical standards to have developed sunstroke that night. But R.A.F. "erks" in World War II, toiling bare-headed and almost bare-bodied on Indian airfields, had disproved old notions that Europeans in the tropics need special kinds of pith hat.

Having been out with Frontier Corps units under the British Raj, and in the early post-Partition period when the Corps was still largely British-officered, I had kept an interested though amateur eye open for any falling-off in standards. I saw none, either in 1951 or 1952; discipline remained strict, tactics careful, organization firm. But this gusht certainly had a pleasant picknicky atmosphere—in itself a fact of interest, because of Kabul's reports of frequent disorder in Waziristan. It was a physical training exercise, not a possibly operational venture; a mere energetic country walk. Obviously no danger was expected.

Another expedition from Wana took us by car back to Tanai, then down a road known to me from a journey in 1948, which

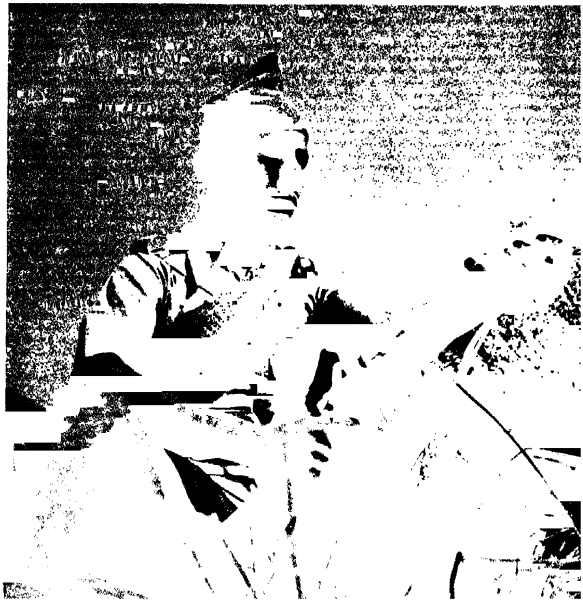

PLATE 31

On 'gusht' with the South Waziristan Scouts beyond Wana

PLATE 32. The heliograph: Scouts' sepoy signalling to headquarters when on 'gusht'

connects South Waziristan with the Zhob, in Baluchistan. We were to be guests at lunch of a Wazir malik, Umar Din, of Spin village, half-way between Tanai and the Zhob border post of Gulkach. Leading local tribesmen would be there.

Umar Din received us in a big flat-roofed tent. Tent-poles and inner lining and roof were festively hung with coloured stripy blankets and shawls. A long table had been cloth-covered, and senior guests sat or lolled before it on string-beds draped with bright quilts and cushions. Other guests or onlookers squatted along the tent-walls.

Before and after food each guest in turn was as usual offered a basin and soap. An attendant then poured water over his hands from a spouted vessel; after washing, hands were dried on a towel laid over the attendant's shoulder. Some guests, at the second washing, sucked up water from their cupped hands, rubbing and rinsing the teeth.

The food—five excellent sheep-courses, roast liver, roast ribs, boiled haunch and so forth, also a chicken curry—included a delicacy which may sound disgusting: solid fat, the tail of a dumba or fat-tailed sheep.[1] Even before reaching the lips, its greasiness to the touch may repel—for tribal meals are eaten with your fingers, not in the European way with forks and spoons previously in others' mouths. Nevertheless dumba is a speciality which no stranger should miss. Taken hot, it is very good.

Conversation, at first fitful, sprang to eager life at a question which I had asked elsewhere in Waziristan, as in the Malakand—and which I later put in the Khyber. It derived from a remark by a merchant of Peshawar on my return this year. The tribesmen, he had told me, no longer felt interest in Kashmir. They thought they had been let down by Pakistan. Supplies had been wretchedly short, whether of weapons and ammunition, or of rations, clothes and medicines. And they had suffered many casualties.

Presumably, I enquired, what my friend the merchant said was true? Much time had passed since the Kashmir fighting. No doubt nowadays in Waziristan they scarcely bothered any more about the affair.

At once arose a hubbub of denial. They were very interested in Kashmir, they asserted. It was only out of respect for the Pakistani Government's inexplicable present caution that they

[1] See p. 86; also Plate 11

held back. At the word Go, they would return in even greater strength and energy. It was a matter of honour, indelible, a blood-feud. Their fellow-tribesmen had been killed and wounded out there on the Kashmiri hills by infidels, Hindus and Sikhs. It could never be forgotten; there would be vengeance. Fat Peshawaris were worthless sources of information about tribal sentiment. They concocted spiritless stories in their silly heads, out of the ill-humours of indolent surfeited bodies.

So the rippling, indignant talk flowed, well launched by an enquiry which, wherever put, evoked the same answer.

Many of these men, it appeared, had fought in Kashmir. Two, like the Wazir khassadar whom I met in the Tochi during February 1948,[1] had got as far as Pattan in the first invading wave.

Rahim outwardly maintained his glum disapproval of Waziristan and all men in it.

"They're as twisty as a pi-dog's tail", he asserted. "Why, Sahib, when we were fighting in the Khaisora, the khassadars on our side during the day used to fire against us at night! Any of these people, for 500 rupees, would kill his best friend."

Perhaps more justified was his remark when we were in Wana bazaar one morning, choosing local Pathan shirt-material to go with my new Srinagar-made suit.[2] As always on such occasions, idlers gathered, inquisitive about the stranger's purchases.

"They shoot one with their eyes", grumbled Rahim confidentially. And indeed I know nothing quite like the stares of tribesmen in Waziristan: not hostile necessarily, but certainly at first not friendly, they pierce, burrowing into the flesh, carrying no warmth of possible kindness or mercy, reading you through, laying bare weaknesses.

But Rahim's disparagements were partly for form's sake. In fact he appeared fairly content with Waziristan under present conditions, much less genuinely concerned for my safety than on former visits. My liking for views from lorry roof-tops, then, had more than once evoked furious protest.

Gulmar had returned, delighted by his 48 hours. And in appreciation he had brought me a present: a Mahsud dagger with delicately-carved bone hilt, in a leather sheath encrusted with little flashing stones.

[1] See pp. 217, 218 [2] See pp. 205, 206

"Do you like it please?" He scrutinized me uncertainly, handing it over, adding in innocence, "Just the same sort, Sahib, as ripped up the belly of that English motor-selling gentleman in Bannu only recently." [1]

It would be a fine weapon, no doubt, for Gulmar's village is known throughout Waziristan for its skilled metal-workers.

"Unsheathe it."

I did as told. And there, elegantly wrought in gilded Roman lettering along the evil grey blade, was the Mahsud craftsman's transcription of my name as Gulmar told it him: ANSTIFANS.

Gulmar's return was opportune, for news had come of an impending visit, by air, of the Pakistani Minister for Frontier Regions, Mr Gurmani. He would speak to Wazir and Mahsud chiefs assembled from far and wide in a jirga.[2]

Already Gulmar had proved effective as political aide, introducing me with tact and discrimination to such tribal worthies as happened to be in Wana. He had much local knowledge. And now men of greater standing would appear.

We met some near the bazaar the day before the Minister's arrival: Khan Bahadur Mehr Dil Khan, the Mahsud leader said to be now over 80, who had engaged in a personal brawl with Pandit Nehru at the unfortunate Razmak jirga in October 1946; the famous red-haired, green-eyed Khan Sahib Hayat, two of whose sons I had earlier got acquainted with, one in Karachi and another in Dargai, for Mahsuds are great wanderers; the other malik Hayat, black-bearded, probable instigator of much fighting against the British; several more. At Gulmar's suggestion I was politely introduced by red-haired Hayat to a squatting circle of about 30.

Next morning all Wana was in a bustle. Expectant schoolboys were already lined up, beneath fluttering paper flags of welcome, as we sped forth to the landing-ground. There, lining the strip in a double row like a flower-bed, sat the maliks. Behind them some earlier cars were parked; a smart S.W.S. guard-of-honour stood at ease; then there was a thicker row of squatting figures—the public this time; and last, well back, lest the horses get

[1] A former Army officer, stabbed to death in the bazaar by a Mahsud apparently quite unknown to him, and unprovoked

[2] Tribal gathering; almost, at times, a local law-making body or embryonic parliament

startled, some of what the Frontier Corps calls Mounted Infantry.

Air-transport is a chancy affair, and today's weather was chancy too, owing to duststorms. The Ministerial plane was late. A Western crowd, assembled in such circumstances, would get restive. Delkarian crowds know better; Asia understands how to put time in its place. No fidgety ill-humour had yet developed when, 1½ hours behind schedule, the aircraft eventually hove in view.

As it turned in low to alight, seemingly rather off course, momentary alarm ruffled part of the flower-bed of squatting maliks at the airstrip-edge; but they held their ground manfully. Presentations to the Minister and his retinue having with due formality been achieved, we all trooped off to the welcome shade of mulberry trees in the Political Agent's garden, where a lavish lunch and stirring dances by young Wazirs interspersed the day's important palavers.

First a select group of Mahsud leaders, in a half-circle, expounded their views on local affairs to the Minister and his supporting officials, using much able oratory. They wanted fertile lands for colonization in the plains, more recruitment in the Armed Forces, more schools. They referred to their sacrifices in Kashmir, and their efforts in countering absurd tales from Afghanistan. They sought no reward; nevertheless it was necessary that tribal territory be put on level terms with the Frontier Province and other parts of Pakistan, so that they could serve the country better. Pakistan's enemies were their enemies.

They then withdrew, and a group of less rhetorically gifted Wazirs succeeded them. Thereafter both groups rearranged themselves, and sat together to hear the Minister's answers.

Everyone in the end seemed content. It had been a good jirga, friendly and constructive, fascinating to watch. But it had taken a long time. Here lay a paradox, a curious by-product of the great changes in 1947. In the old days, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India or the Governor of the Frontier Province —approximately Mr Gurmani's British official counterparts— would have been fluent Pashtu-speakers. Though non-Muslims, detached and perhaps insular in outlook, they could have talked to the maliks direct. The Pakistani Minister of Frontier Regions, the maliks' co-religionist, was a Punjabi. He knew no Pashtu. Everything said throughout the afternoon had been translated.

Chapter 25

THE KABUL ROAD

THE Khyber is so famous, and so conveniently near Peshawar, that every newcomer to Delkaria wants to go there, as to the Taj Mahal—or in Europe to Versailles, the Alps, or the Tower of London. Permission has to be got; its rich historical associations are mainly bloody. Shortly before I went up—on return from Wana—two foreigners had visited it of a sort whose safety no Government would hazard: Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, followed by Mr Eugene Black of the World Bank. This, Pakistanis pointed out, had been at a moment when, according to Kabul Radio, the area was in tumult owing to the doings of a lashkar [1] organized by a dissident Afridi malik on behalf of "Pakhtoonistan."

My hosts were the Khyber Rifles,[2] and while with them I was taken for a closer view of "the defences": massive concrete structures built at much cost by the British Raj in 1939-41, to fend off anticipated invasion by mechanized German hordes thrusting down the historic conquerors' route through Kabul and Jalalabad. When the war against Japan was at its most disastrous phase during March 1942 and Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek was on a goodwill visit to India, he was brought here to see these evidences of military might, and to return encouraged to Chungking. Possibly however he then thought that, like the howitzers of Singapore, they pointed the wrong way.

But was that so now? To Afghan eyes, perhaps not. Admittedly "the defences" at present lay almost empty. Nevertheless it was known that, all through the Khyber hills, many ingeniously-sited artillery emplacements were scattered; hidden machine-gun nests, pill-boxes for riflemen, even large underground galleries for hospitals, offices, and electrical installations. Rows of concrete anti-tank pegs visibly traversed the valley-floors; road-blocks lay ready.

I had seen some of these structures during earlier visits, as also the similar less lavish ones in the Khurram and Waziristan. Pakistanis now wryly remarked that the unused fortifications of

[1] See p. 227, n. [2] See p. 243

which they were inheritors might at any rate assist, even if very lightly manned, in fending off any invading hordes of "Pakhtoons."

This stay in the Khyber was separate from my proposed visit to Afghanistan, about which, on reaching Peshawar from Wana, I found officialdom still dubious—apparently as much on Rahim's account as mine. A Pakistani permit, it seemed, raised knotty problems.

At last, however, after discussions spread over several more days, and much courteous tea-drinking in the offices of the Afghan Consulate-General, the Pakistani C.I.D., the Government of the Frontier Province, and the Deputy High Commissioner of the United Kingdom, the necessary papers for us both emerged, and we prepared to set forth, via the Khyber once more, on the last lap of my 1952 journey—and perhaps our last journey together.

I remained very curious to examine "Pakhtoonistan" from the other side. My mind on the subject was not blank. I had heard much of the latest Pakistani comment in Peshawar. Moreover my visit to Waziristan, and Frontier travels in 1948 and 1951, had shown many Afghan reports on conditions on the Pakistani side to be mere fiction. And from 1947 "The Statesman", on what seemed the affair's general merits, and because Pakistan was a member of the Commonwealth, had supported her editorially, at times making sharp criticisms of Afghan policy—to the Indian Government's wrath.

Nevertheless, the problem might well seem different from Kabul; no balanced opinion could be formed without going there. And I had liked Afghans on a former journey before attaining editorship, when writings of mine had pleased them.

Seats for Rahim and myself had been kindly offered in the British Embassy's fortnightly bus; and on a very hot, dry afternoon in late May we started off, a little ruffled by a last-moment effort to offload Rahim in the interests of one of the French Embassy's staff. This I resisted. After so much hard work for his passage on many uncomfortable office chairs I was more bent on taking him than ever. I would not budge without him, I declared; an Afghan bus was leaving two days later, we would go in that. This however was vetoed, and we thereupon all fairly amicably if congestedly clambered in.

The large hinder part of the roofed-in vehicle consisted of diplomatic mysteries: mailbags and stores, much of the latter obviously edible. The French lady sat by the driver. On a bench just behind them, permitting very little leg-room, were arrayed the rest of us hip to hip: the British official in charge, three Pakistani employees, and myself. Rahim's bulk surmounted a petrol can. Crushed against me one of the Embassy's servants, an Akora Khattak youth, soon fell asleep. His turban rolled off as we rounded a bend, revealing a shaven pate and startling him back into temporary consciousness. I apologized for proving so breastless and angular a mother, which seemed to restore the party's good humour after our initial tiff; and he pillowed himself repeatedly on me throughout the journey.

From my previous visit I realized that, when we left the fine British-built road at Torkham, the drive would be an ordeal. But I then spent two days over it, not one as now planned, and used a well-sprung saloon car. The road-surface worsens dramatically from the moment you enter Afghanistan. Indeed, though this is her main communications-channel with the outer world, along which most of her trade and visitors must move, often no surface remains, but only the underlying Afghan rock-system; or you deviate altogether from the scene of the original track, and bounce forth over the barren waste, because of collapsed bridges and unrepaired washouts. In sandy countries like Arabia such ventures may for short periods even be a pleasant change; but not over Afghanistan's craggy landscape.

Actually the journey covered less than 250 miles, and we made five short halts. But in retrospect, from our release about 4 p.m. from the Torkham Customs' post till we underwent our last and third examination in Kabul about 10 a.m. next morning, it seems a continuum of jerks, bumps, potholes, rasping gear-changes, abrupt braking, swirls of inblown dust from behind, fumes from a much-afflicted engine. Speeds seldom touched 25 m.p.h., and often dropped to a grinding crawl. This approach to a capital city must rank high among the world's more irksome undertakings—despite the sometimes amazing beauty of the landscape.

Between Torkham and Jalalabad you traverse a characteristic Central Asian scene: a vast stony plateau rimmed by remote mountains, the whole slightly tilted—a puzzling arrangement,

since marginal hills create an illusion of descent anyway, even on a level plain. The tilt in this case fell to the right where, pressed against a wall of brown mountain, the Kabul river's distant coils glinted. On the left and parallel ran other, higher ranges, soaring in one part to the fine 15,000-ft. snow-peaks of the Safed Koh; behind them lay the Khurram, Pakistani territory. As we lurched into the Westering sun a haze of translucent wings would whirr up: locusts, the heralds of a gobbling invasion which swept these regions later.

At Dakka, some hours before Jalalabad, vehicle and passengers were subjected to intermediate official scrutiny; and in the meanwhile we sipped tea, seated on string-beds at one of the many hospitable little stalls which grace the route. Tea-drinking in Afghanistan has its own etiquette. A pot is brought, and handleless cups, but they already have the sugar in them and there are no spoons. A puzzle results: how to contrive that your last cupful contains some sugary residue, and that your first is not cloyingly over-sweet. Most Westerners fail; their gullets do not get the first cupful down hot enough.

The Afghan soldiers lounging around the tea-stall were friendly smiling lads, but to Rahim's surprise knew no Pashtu. Unlike the long-shirted, smart-turbaned, wide-partouked sepoys who defend Pakistan's frontier, they were not Pathans but round-faced Tajjiks and Uzbegs, brought from the semi-Mongolian North beyond the Hindukush. They wore the shoddy Westernized uniforms of the Afghan Army: trousers and buttoned tunics, and small peaked caps rather like those used by the Japanese.

In the 1920's and 1930's Afghanistan did what she could, by means such as these uniforms, to emphasize that she was no satellite of her big neighbour the old British India, but fully independent; and perhaps it was then good for British visitors to receive sharp reminder in many small ways that the Raj did not reach Kabul. French, not English, is the subsidiary Western tongue favoured there; some Afghans who know English still pretend not to. And familiar Oriental words when Afghanized into Roman script take unwonted shapes, dilkusha for example becoming delkoscha. Afghan motor-traffic drives to the right.

We reached Jalalabad after dark. After the empty waste it seemed a metropolis. Lights shone, radio-music blared, many sturdy figures sat tea-drinking, the road was tree-bordered. On

the former journey I spent a night here at the British Consulate—given over in 1947 to the Pakistanis. Now however, having briefly halted at the Indian Consulate to leave mails, we sallied forth for more boneshaking under the stars; and before long, instead of turning left towards the lovely Moghul garden at Nimla, whither I had gone before, we took the new lower-altitude road which twists up the Kabul river gorge. Though less corrugated and potholed than what we had been on, its surface was already knocked into poor condition.

Here was a country of possible banditries. Afghanistan in general, considering its wildness, is remarkably safe for travellers; and during summer, to avoid the heat, most traffic on the Peshawar-Kabul route moves at night. But there had lately been two ambuscades near Jalalabad, and the Pakistani Embassy's fort-nightly bus had changed to day-time travel only. Soon after my return a more serious affair was reported, involving casualties as well as looting, the British Embassy's bus being among those involved.

It was hot and humid in the gorge. Sarobi, where hydro-electric works are in progress, seemed to my drowsy eye an American mining camp. The Akora Khattak was now asleep all over me beyond recall, his young body surprisingly hard, his cranium joggling bonily on my shoulder. About an hour later, on a breezy upland, we stopped at a tea-stall for two hours' rest on string-beds said to be bugless, setting forth before dawn for our climb over the Lataband.

This range, between Sarobi and Kabul, is peculiar. Although in places reaching 10,000 or 11,000 ft., and about 6,000 ft. at the pass, it consists not of rock but of uncouth brittle puddingstone: rounded boulders embedded in a loose sandy matrix. Sterile and tawny at the lower levels, it becomes pleasantly grass-covered near the top. In fold after fold this extraordinary mountain recedes, like a gigantic ocean roller much creased and rippled of surface. A wearisome spectacle as I had last seen it in the full glare of day, it was now, at dawn, lit wonderfully with slanting colours; the whole scene glowed green-gold. And beyond, far away, velvety with distance, stood the real rock-peaks, snow-tipped, which always somewhere ennoble an Afghan landscape.

The descent to Kabul from the Lataband is of such startling beauty that all the journey's fatigue and exasperation wipes itself

away. As the road winds down from the mountain's featureless bulk, an unfolding gracious vision of a great verdant plain refreshes the eye. Shining watercourses dissect it, tall poplars and rich rounded orchards adorn it. Beyond, in the North, tower the blue-and-silver pinnacles of the Hindukush. The effect is rather like that of the Vale of Kashmir, approached not from Muzaffera-bad and the Jhelum gorge but over the Banihal pass nowadays used by the Indian Army. But whereas the Kashmiri landscape may be spoilt by over-prettiness, suggesting that all is illusion, this Afghan scene has hard reality.

Ahead lies Kabul, a distant jumble of low roofs dominated by Islamic domes. As you get nearer, regal ostentation begins: relics of Moghul magnificence, whose traditions still linger, and the subsequent trashier imitative efforts of modern monarchs. The road abruptly achieves much better surface; it widens, acquiring stately breadth; orderly rows of mulberries, elms and poplars flank it. The large tomb of King Nadir Khan, founder of the present Afghan regime, whom a lashkar mainly of Mahsuds and Wazirs from what is now Pakistan put on his throne in 1930, stand impressively on an eminence, not yet finished.

British visitors usually stay either at the British Embassy or at a hotel in the city. Last time I was invited to the Embassy—or Legation as it then modestly termed itself, in days when it wielded much more power, for the end of British rule in India has necessarily weakened British diplomacy at capitals such as Teheran, Kabul, or Kathmandu. There can be few pleasanter places in which to be a guest. About four miles from the city, an English country house in the best sense, set in a great walled enclosure amidst gardens and the houses of subsidiary officials, it looks forth across a tawny Afghan waste to the glittering Hindukush—the spectacular landscape somehow intensifying its Englishness.

Nevertheless there are drawbacks in being there, at any rate for a writer. The distance from the city's doings is inconvenient. And you feel a prisoner of kindness and perhaps of red tape, cut off from fact, enwrapped in an atmosphere carefully non-Asian. At moments I yearned to test Kabul's mental climate on my own.

And this time I would do so, for the Embassy had not asked me to stay. Accordingly at 10 a.m.—after the Afghans at their final Customs' post had examined us and our luggage yet again—we

parted fatigued but happy, they for their enclosure of British soil four miles off, Rahim and I for the city proper.

The Afghan capital consists of two parts, very different, the old and the new. Both have character. The new part's streets are straight and broad. In the residential districts high colour-washed mud walls flank them, embodying heavily-shuttered wooden doors which give access to the invisible homes behind. Each house lies secretly within an almost fortress-like rampart, probably having a well-kept garden, gay and sweet with roses now. Here live Afghan officials or merchants, and the small European community; in these districts also are most of the Embassies and Legations, the Government offices and the Royal Palace.

There is a considerable Westernized shopping centre, enlarged since my last visit. My hotel was here, near banks and business offices. New Kabul's general style of architecture is Central European—further evidence of the Afghans' studied rejection in the 1930's of British influences seeping in from India. Walking in it you may suffer moments of sudden disorientation, when these distinctive buildings, outlined against a snowy background of mountain, whisk you away across a gulf of years to Innsbrück or Zürich.

The Kabul river divides the two parts. Over there beyond the bridge lies another world, unmodernized, traversed by shadowy bazaars, some of them roofed in the manner of the souks of Damascus or Baghdad. Great hairy Bactrian camels press through the crowd, men tottering beneath burdens, pack-asses with bulging loads. People of many kinds and garbs are seen: typical turbaned Pathans in baggy trousers; Westernized Afghans in trilby hats, and the smart waterproofs which, however dry the weather, they nowadays unaccountably wear; Mongoloid tribesmen from the Oxus in long-sleeved hairy coats hanging loosely as capes; sleek Persians; Turki merchants in vertically-striped robes; unexpectedly many colourful, bearded Sikhs, perhaps the most far-ranging of all Delkaria's people, found similarly in Singapore, Auckland, or Vancouver; poorly-uniformed Afghan soldiery, or perhaps a quick-strutting high-shouldered officer in shining buttons and cap.

Some distance Westward of these two cities, behind the rocky shoulder of Asmai hill, lies in awkward silence a third Kabul,

or rather the hollow framework thereof. This is where King Amanullah, whose rash policies in the late 1920's caused the nine-months' chaos which brought Nadir Khan to the throne, designed a capital suited to his grandiose ideas.

Little had been done to it since my last visit. It consists of a splendid poplar-lined avenue four miles long, of subsidiary roads and a dozen or so residences, mostly uninhabited, and of two vast stone buildings of semi-French style upon which the great avenue focusses. These still lie in part windowless and unused, having proved, since their creation, a perplexity for Kabul's administrators, being miles from anywhere and in winter almost impossible to heat.

Chapter 26

AFGHAN FINALE

THE diplomatic colony in Kabul rotates upon itself, more out of touch with its surroundings, perhaps, than any other in the world. While staying there I discussed current topics in various Embassies—British, American, Indian and Pakistani. Some of the Embassy staffs said candidly that they were not sure what was going on even in the city, still less in the remote rural parts; to be well-informed in Afghanistan was indeed difficult.

Afghans, they declared—I had heard this before—were traditionally secretive about politics. Their withdrawn, high-walled residences symbolized a general attitude. And their Government made them more secretive still. Officials could not accept invitations to foreigners' parties without consulting higher authority. Even the Dean of the University, they told me, avoided consenting to preside at a function to commemorate the poet Iqbal until the Prime Minister had approved.

The complete seclusion of women was an added obstacle. Purdah was enforceable by law. And so was the Ramazan fast—now imminent. Islam, said the Embassy staffs, had a harshness in Afghanistan similar to that prevailing in Saudi Arabia. Sects such as the Ismailis and Qadianis were not recognized as Muslim. Kabul had no church, for fear of fanatical attack; Christian residents perforce worshipped in their homes.

As a result of all this, Ambassadorial circles in Kabul gyrate much on their own, detached from Afghan contacts. The same restricted topics pass continually under review—"Pakhtoonistan", for instance—until they enlarge out of focus or get blurred or lopsided.

At the time of my stay however an exciting conversational novelty had suddenly arisen: "the arrests." For it so happened that, just before, the whole political Opposition, such as it was, had been locked up. According to the Afghan Government's communiqué, those detained consisted of Dr Mahmoudi and 16 more. Some of the Embassies however thought other-

wise, widely different figures being mentioned, impossible to reconcile. One source put the jailings throughout the country at 2,000; another at 1,200; the British thought 400 excessive, and believed most of the prisoners would be soon freed; the Indians backed the published Afghan total of 17.

What importance to attach to the affair was also much in question. The communiqué had referred darkly to "enemies of the State." Did that phrase denote an outside Power: Russia for example, or perhaps Pakistan? No one seemed sure, though those who surmised Russia were the majority. Then there were the affair's domestic aspects. Some thought it an ideological disaster; the tender plant of Afghan democracy had been nipped in the bud. And what would now happen about American aid? The Kabul Government, critics might say, was less worthy of dollars even than reactionary regimes such as Viet Nam. Others roundly called this nonsense. Democracy in bud had never existed in Afghanistan; the jailed politicians were mere self-seekers without popular backing. To decry the present Government as reactionary was meaningless, declared these realists, for no imaginable alternative could be found; its overthrow or abrupt modernization would cause mere chaos.

How far, if at all, the Government itself might be divided over the affair was uncertain too. There was the usual talk—probably unfounded—about intrigues within the Ruling Family. In fact the family has shown remarkable aptitude for holding together over the stressful years, thereby keeping for itself all the main plums of State office. Nor, apparently, was much known about conditions in Afghan jails. Would the politicians be decently treated, I asked? Answers were vague. But in the city, at undiplomatic Rahim-ish levels, detailed and hair-raising particulars of what might be happening to them were readily supplied.

Another puzzle, bearing on dollars, was the country's financial state. According to some Pakistanis, the Afghan economy had been so shattered that insurrection of some sort was overdue. Other sources, too, spoke of grave discontent and impoverishment among the small but influential middle class. Possibly "the arrests" had some connection with this. Certainly there had been much inflation. I went about with a pocket bulging with Afghan paper rupees of disappointing purchasing-power, and cannot now recall the exact exchange-rate.

On the other hand, I was assured that the rural population at least had plenty to eat and were fairly well off. This tallied with such impressions as my much-joggled eyes and brain had been able to form on the journey in. And Kabul itself had grown impressively since my previous visit. Foreign experts were said to be satisfied that Afghan national finances were managed with reasonable prudence, and that the currency had enough metallic backing.

My first local introduction to "Pakhtoonistan" startled me. En route to one of the Government offices, unsure of my way, I sought aid from a young Westernized Afghan—clad of course, for it was a brilliant day, in a smart waterproof. He offered to accompany me and proved amiable: a student recently back from a State-aided scholarship in the U.S.A., well-built, blue-eyed and intelligent, who had stopped in London en route and been befriended by an English youth.

"And would you believe it, Sir, John didn't even know where Afghanistan was! He first asked, was it perhaps in Africa? Yet I think he'd been well brought up."

"And what did you do?"

"Well of course, I told him: between Iran and Pakhtoonistan in the middle of Asia. But really, Sir, England was very nice, and John's parents were so kind. And even the spring weather, though a bit cloudy, wasn't very different from our Afghan weather. . . ."

And so he prattled on, unaware of my surprise. From afar, in Calcutta or Delhi, it had been hard to judge what "Pakhtoonistan" might mean to Afghans. Kabul's pronouncements had varied much. But here, to this fine young man at any rate, a representative I supposed of the coming Kabuli intelligentsia, it was no vague project or ideal; it meant something solid, already on the map.

The term proved solider than I had expected, too, in my talks with Afghan officials—among them the President of the Department of Tribal Affairs, Sayed Shamsuddin Khan Majruh, and the Chief of the Press Department, Khan Maiwandwal. According to Khan Majruh, Afghanistan required Pakistan to relinquish grasp of the entire tract which ethnically could be said to be inhabited by Pathans: the Frontier Province; the adjacent tribal territories; the Northern principalities of Chitral, Dir, Swat,

and Amb; all Baluchistan; and the Mekran coast close up to Karachi.

She did not however want to absorb this herself. Indeed no! That, he said, might unbalance her; she was already well-knit. What was necessary was that the inhabitants of this tract, akin in culture, race and language to the Afghans, and now tyrannized over by Karachi, should be allowed to shape their political future, preferably as the independent State that I could see depicted on his wall—which indeed I had perhaps been eyeing impolitely, fascinated by the maps displayed. If however, after being given opportunity of free self-expression, the oppressed Pakhtoons really wanted to remain within Pakistan—it was an odd notion, but in fairness must be considered—then Afghanistan would not object.

The maps appeared very strange. The "Pakhtoonistan" outlined on them was an exceedingly narrow, wriggly object, wedged in between Afghanistan on one flank and the remains of West Pakistan on the other, with the bulk of India behind; and consisted almost entirely of infertile mountainous country whose revenues would be meagre in the extreme. Some railways entered it sideways, but none ran the length of it.

I spent some time also discussing "Pakhtoonistan" in Khan Maiwandwal's room. The telephone rang. I could not help noticing, as when with other officials, and with the Afghan Consul in Peshawar, that the ensuing talk, though presumably between "Pakhtoons," rippled to and fro in Persian, not Pashtu.

A British acquaintance in Peshawar, before I set off, had commiserated with me; my hotel would be appalling, he said. How absurd of the Embassy to feel embarrassed by "The Statesman" having formerly backed the Pakistanis over "Pakhtoonistan"! What was the Commonwealth for, if by supporting a member of it you disqualified yourself from British official hospitality?

This gloomy forecast proved doubly unkind. The hotel was clean, and the management and staff friendly and well-meaning. To have stayed a second time in the Embassy would have been less fun. My fellow-inmates were most engaging to gaze upon and speculate about; those whom I identified as former inmates of Dean's looked even odder now. The food, though I would have preferred it less Westernized, could do you no harm. I had

a fair-sized room, with bathroom attached, in which an eager youth amidst clouds of smoke heated water in a large wood-burning stove. And the place was conveniently situated.

Its one sin was noise. Through the shuttered windows penetrated all the rich pandemonium which Asian cities can create: clop-clop of horses, donkey-clatter, inexhaustible kerbside gossip or business palavers, sudden hails to friends at a distance, dramatic doings in the doggy world; baa-ing of driven sheep, toots and tinklings from bicyclists, the shrill horns of small cars, the bouncings and honkings and gear-crashing of lorries or buses, intermittent roaring tests of decrepit engines in a repair-shop nearby. Also nearby, and not intermittent, were gramophone loud-speakers in two open-fronted restaurants which vied with one another in enticing clients by oft-repeated Oriental ditties from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. And after that hour, when the songs and strummings suddenly stopped, extraordinary battles developed among Kabul's canine population, surging to and fro in defence or pursuit, so far as I could see through the gloom, of a large snarling collie-like animal with only three legs.

Nor, when in Kabul, was I disqualified from British hospitality. The Embassy was friendly. I had lunch with the Ambassador; and one of his staff took me to Paghman, the Afghan Ruling Family's summer resort, 25 miles away at about 7,000 ft. in the foothills of the Hindukush, a delicious spot, still spring-like. There we wandered first in the Court Minister's garden, and then —special privilege—in that of the King, a place of exquisitely-calculated design. The art of formal garden-making in Afghanistan has descended unbroken from the Moghuls and is most carefully nurtured, the foreign planners, mainly German, being chosen for acquaintance with the Oriental traditions.

We entered, first, a flowery upper terrace; then strolled down steps beneath a transverse masonry screen so contrived that suddenly, with astonished delight, you faced a vast garden which first fell sharply, then levelled, virtually a whole ingeniously-tended landscape in itself, enclosed by a high remote buff wall; all laid out with walks and streams and weeping willows, fountains and tall poplars, flower-beds and lawns and scented ornamental shrubs, and a great open-air swimming-pool for Royalty, grass-margined, under an artificial waterfall.

At lunch the Ambassador, pleasantly frank, had enquired if I

thought him right in not asking me to stay. One of his staff, he believed, had told me why; anyway of course I knew. And I knew too that he had plenty of good spare rooms upstairs. And he liked having guests; the life here was sometimes lonely.

Myself when young an official of much humbler sort, I had no doubt about my answer. Certainly he was right. His good relations with the Afghan Government were what mattered; and my past editorial comments on "Pakhtoonistan", here so big and delicate a subject, had made me a contentious figure.

By this stage however I regarded "Pakhtoonistan" in new perspective. Naturally it bulked big and sombre in Kabul. It did too in the Pakistani Departments concerned in Peshawar or Karachi. It had once done so at times for me, in Calcutta or Delhi, under the Government of India's suspicious frowns. But arriving as I did fresh from Muzaffcrabad and Srinagar and Gilgit, I saw it in altered focus as almost trivial.

Up there in Kashmir was a real problem, hard and practical, something which humanity's best statesmanship might have difficulty now in disentangling; baffling physically because of the massing of armies and the migrations of people, clouded morally by bitter sufferings vividly remembered, and by the clash of ideals. Traversing the cease-fire line had been a very rare privilege, achieved only under U.N. auspices, and through heavy security-curtains and a landscape bristling with opposed troops and equipment. By contrast, getting into Afghanistan was a routine matter, tedious admittedly, but no different from before. Traffic moved to and fro bouncingly but unhindered, as in past years. "The defences" had been there prior to "Pakhtoonistan" being thought of. Nothing of unwonted military significance could be seen. Compared with Kashmir, the "Pakhtoonistan" controversy seemed third-rate and largely bogus.

Though Afghan student-minds might accept Khan Majruh's maps, it was impossible for maturer thought to take them very seriously. A case could indeed be made out—not a bad one—for establishing a State to unite all Pathans. A tenth of Pakistan would have to be sliced off for the purpose, containing about seven million of them; also a third of Afghanistan, containing about four million. But there was no logic in detaching territories from Pakistan only, leaving these to fend for themselves.

Despite disavowals, its purpose could only be eventual annexation on Afghanistan's part, for the "Pakhtoonistan" depicted would lack the resources for independent survival.

And why should Pakistan agree? Her Pathans, from what I had seen, had no wish at all for "release from Karachi's tyranny"; Pathans are not easily tyrannized over anyway. They knew they were richer, better educated, and more democratically governed than the Pathans of Afghanistan. And Pakistan herself was vastly Afghanistan's superior in arms, economic resources, and population. It would be hard, I reflected, to find another instance in history of a little country energetically putting forward such dubious irredentist demands year after year against a much bigger one—and often in grossly offensive terms, for Kabul Radio's scripts had to be seen to be believed.

Ignorance, pride, habit and domestic expediency might be subsidiary factors in the Afghan agitation; but its vehement maintenance for so long seemed explicable only on the supposition of encouragement from outside, by a country bigger still—by India, whose Government in fact hardly bothered to conceal its pleasure at the Afghan-Pakistani rift.

Indo-Afghan collaboration was however obviously a mere affair of convenience, temporary and tactical, a by-product of the haste and carnage of the 1947 Partition. Genuine affinity between Pandit Nehru's new secular Indian Republic, or its anti-Muslim substructure, and this remote and backward Muslim autocracy was inconceivable; they had nothing basically in common. India and Pakistan however had much: in language and culture, shared historical experience, democratic institutions. Eventually this would somehow in part at least assert itself; and as they drew together a little closer, not necessarily with the friendliness proper to Commonwealth countries but as mere tolerant neighbours like Spain and Portugal, "Pakhtoonistan" would collapse.

And could not the British meanwhile help to prick the absurd bubble? The Afghan demands were entirely without basis in past treaties, as Whitehall had emphasized when they first emerged in 1946. Need policy in Kabul therefore be so cautious? In the days of the Raj, Britain felt she had some shadowy sort of stake in Afghanistan. Now she had none. Weakness had made her a freer agent. And she still had important commerical, sentimental

and military stakes in Pakistan. During my travels many Pakistanis had been puzzled that British diplomacy apparently made almost no attempt to restrain hostile Afghan propaganda; should not Commonwealth members support one another, they asked? Suggestions that vigorous British initiative might thrust a reluctant Afghanistan into Russia's arms seemed to them laughable. Afghans were long-memoried, and the Ruling Family, well aware of what befell the Muslim principalities of Turkestan, had the strongest reasons in self-interest for avoiding such an embrace.

As our Afghan visit drew to its close Rahim became daily more woebegone. Our time together was drawing very near its end; and soon too, like all good Muslims, he would be plunged in his annual distress, for the beginning of Ramazan—never exactly predictable, because it depends on visibility of the moon—was almost upon us. At unexpected moments his large brown hand would emotionally clasp mine, fondling it Muslim-fashion; and I was now much too heartrent by this warm gesture's sincerity to think of stiff British withdrawal.

Even Kabul at 5,000 ft. was hot; and on an evening near the end of May we took a walk, having postponed it during the afternoon glare. The sun had just gone. A cloudless sky glowed pale gold; hard angular lines of grey mountain edged it. Then lights began twinkling in the city, and suddenly, just before darkness, a heavy boom of guns resounded.

Ramazan had begun; this was the official announcement from the fortress. An appointed watcher, keen-eyed on some hill or high tower, had just discerned a thin slip of silver above the sunken sun's brightness and had sent his message: the new moon had been seen, the fasting month's moon, the Horned Moon of Islam.

APPENDIX I

Delkaria ? *

INDIA is not what she was. I mean this in no loose conversational sense, nor (still less) disparagingly; but as a statement of geographical fact. Large bits of her, to East and West, were lopped off five years ago to make Pakistan, bits containing together nearly 76,000,000 people, that is to say about 33 per cent. more than the total population of this island of Britain. No, India is not what she was.

But, though different, she carries the same name. This causes continual muddle and stress. Speakers, writers and the unfortunate gentlemen whose job it is to make headlines wrestle unavailingly for terms to circumvent the difficulty. How should we describe the unit that was, but is not? The India of the British Raj? Pompous, and obviously far too long. British India? Heavens, no! That formerly meant merely the provinces, as contrasted with the Princely States. The old India, Imperial India, undivided India—none of them wholly right, all of them lengthy. Contrariwise, we may take our pick of the new India, independent India, republican India, residual India, Pandit Nehru's India; all, alas, flawed also. And where does Pakistan come in? Undoubtedly much news about the two countries which were brought into existence five years ago get wastepaper-basketed merely because of bewilderment in British minds about terms.

And there is worse. Not only are commentators and publicists here put in a muddle. Feelings overseas are continually hurt at the point where, in a new-born State, they are most sensitive—national existence. Because the new India still calls herself India, having kept the old name, that which has become non-India, I mean Pakistan, repeatedly finds herself getting no mention at all. Used vaguely and thoughtlessly in the pre-1947 sense, the old term is freely applied to both countries. Pakistan willy-nilly thus becomes embodied within her rival; and what could be more repugnant to the smaller when both, since creation, have remained so unfriendly as to be almost at war? Letters still stream forth eastwards from Britain, amidst the mild tut-tutting doubtless of postal sorters, but certainly to the fury of their Pakistani recipients, addressed to So-and-So, at Such-and-Such place, "Pakistan, India."

None of this would have happened had the new India, Pandit

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Nehru's India, chosen at birth, as was generally expected until late in gestation, to be called Hindustan. Touchy Pakistanis suspect the whole thing as a plot, a long-range Brahmanical cleverness from Delhi, part of the bigger country's basic disbelief in their capacity or right to survive, of its sense of outrage that their country should even temporarily have come into being. The two States, however, recently entered their sixth year of life, amidst hearty expressions of goodwill from Britain and elsewhere. Can anything be done, by fresh forms of words, to set this vexed matter to rights, thus both assuaging hurt Pakistani feelings, and relieving Western speakers' and writers' perplexities?

I think so, though the suggested remedy is incomplete. The term India, meaning the new India, independent India, seems to have come to stay. As a substitute Hindustan, neat though it would be, could not well be forced now into common parlance, contrary to India's choice, without causing reasonable offence. Nor would Bharat catch on here, officially enshrined though it is in the Indian Constitution as a term alternative to India. British eyes would boggle at the h; moreover Pakistani newspaper-men, by habitually erasing India from incoming cables and substituting Bharat, popping it even into the mouths of people who have never heard the word, have spoilt it, using it obviously with derisive intent. No; so far as India, meaning the new India, republican India, is concerned, Pakistanis must, I fear, regard themselves as having been diddled.

But what of the wider geographical area, that which, in the British days, was India, but is now by no means wholly so? Must we continue to endure, as the best available term, not the Indian subcontinent—for that dangerously begs the question—but "the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent"? Emphatically I would say no. It has twenty-eight letters; what could be more uncouth? The title of this article has only eight.

The British public is not bad at swallowing new terms. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and other bizarre but minor novelties emerged in my boyhood all bristly from the remains of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; yet I soon watched my elders mouthing themwithout a qualm. St. Petersburg officially became Petrograd, then not much later Leningrad; we dutifully complied with both changes. Iran subsequently slipped into ready use, though perhaps never quite ousting Persia. Thailand admittedly has proved a bother, but merely because it altered itself back and forth three times. Brno might have been obediently uttered but that, for us, it is unpronounceable. We have lately stomached Benelux and Nato.

Still nearer our mark we may interestedly observe Indonesia, Australasia, Malaya, all of them terms fairly recent in origin, and coined to describe composite geographical areas. In Northern Europe is another one. We speak easily of Scandinavia—five syllables; might we not find Delkaria easier still? The Delkarian peninsula, to my eye, spells itself more prettily than the Iberian. How pleasant it would have been to read, on August 11th, shortly before the national anniversaries of India and Pakistan, that "a new service of Comet jet aircraft has been opened, flying to Delkaria and Ceylon." Instead, both the B.B.C. in its morning news-bulletin, and "The Times" in its second leader, announced that the Comet had set forth "for India and Ceylon"—omitting Pakistan, the third member of the Commonwealth concerned, though Karachi was a scheduled stopping-place as well as Bombay. Because of such clumsiness there were once more gnashings of teeth among the affronted representatives of 76,000,000 people, both on the spot and at Pakistan House, Lowndes Square.

Why Delkaria in particular? So clear have been the clues that perhaps I need not specify. But I would add, in offering the new word, that its undertones, in both English and Hindustani, have singular charm. Del, besides meaning Delhi, India's capital, suggests in English delicious, delight, or in Hindustani the word for heart; similarly kar, besides meaning Karachi, suggests caress, or, in Hindustani, the word for do or deed, implying health and vigour. None of the alternatives imaginable to me can be claimed to approach it in merit. Indo-Pakistania, Pakind, Indipak: all atrocious, in length, in order or in adjectival form. Delkaria has brevity, its adjective looks well, it possesses happy connotations, it puts the two countries in correct priority, yet impartially gives them an equal number of letters—three each for luck, and a couple more for fun.

Its adoption into popular usage in Britain, throughout the Commonwealth, in the U.S.A., and (look at the term!) in "the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent" itself might, I believe, really do a little to lessen ill-will and misunderstanding. I venture therefore to commend it—from the heart—for I worked in Delkaria with enjoyment and sympathy for over twenty years.

APPENDIX II

Flights with the Pakistani Air Force

I

THE quality of the pleasure is hard to explain. Partly, while experiencing it, I hate it. Almost always, at some point, I am much more frightened than I want. Moreover, a 48-year-old sedentary civilian ought on principle now to have outgrown any schoolboyish need for such excitements.

Yet with little or no shame I confess that I have not managed this; and that, when out of editorial harness, if given opportunity for a slightly unusual flight, especially in small military aircraft, I snap at it with a zest wholly unassuaged.

Passing recently through Western Pakistan en route to England, this happened to me twice within a week.

Indeed, it could be said that I was not so much "given" the second opportunity, as myself positively sought and made it, working for the privilege.

A poor speaker, and on holiday, I nevertheless bullied myself, in the hope of thereby smoothing the official path to my objective, into delivering three dubiously audible lectures to R.P.A.F. personnel alarmingly assembled in audiences up to 300 strong.

The first flight was a journey over an 11,000-ft. snow-pass and between tremendous Himalayan rock-walls in a frail little Harvard to Chitral; the second, a series of aerobatics through the Peshawar skies, strapped inside a specimen of the world's fastest piston-engined fighter, a Fury.

Explanation of the intense delight thus won perhaps lies in this: that to put oneself, by deliberate decision, on or near the knife-edge between two states of mind, mere childlike glee and acute adult alarm or terror, somehow intensifies all the faculties. Time enlarges. Much more than the normal quantum of experience can be packed into it. Memory, too, becomes specially sensitized.

For hours after both flights, and especially the one in the Fury, I found myself, on going over again those 50 lovely aerial minutes, remembering with photographic accuracy little things which, had I

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been asked about them on first confusedly returning to earth, I might have said I had failed to notice at all.

Soaring above a thin ground-haze the Harvard left Peshawar soon after dawn, carrying two unacquainted men northward. In the wide hill-margined cloudless sky it felt puny. Except for a hasty handshake on emplaning I had not met the pilot. Now, for the next 40 minutes, I could see no more of him than the back of his head.

Beyond the familiar camel-coloured Pathan crags crept up remoter snow-ranges. To the left, the Safed Koh above Parachinar . . . a dun gap . . . then a shiny slab of the Hindukush; ahead, the main huge white mass of the Himalaya.

Soon, against the grain of the country, we began traversing foothills, a succession of summits and intervening shadowy valleys. They became taller, ourselves obviously punier. Now their tops were snow-powdered.

What a fate, should our engine fail, to swirl down to those crests and abysses! . . . At 10,000 ft. in our little enclosed cockpit, despite the heater, my feet were cold; draughts of chill air from some chink were climbing my trouser-leg.

Snow was now all around. And suddenly, before I recognized it, we were crossing our main obstacle, the 11,000-ft. Lowarai pass into Chitral, over which I had trudged in 1948, needing six days for a journey now to be done in less than an hour.

Rapidly we began descent, winding above a tiny half-glimpsed river.

Simultaneously the mountains on either flank heightened . . . 15,000; 18,000; 20,000 ft. . . . The scale of the landscape was enormous. I had done some mountain aviation before, but nothing like this. What luck to be in a mere two-seater! Our Harvard seemed a gnat between the gigantic enclosing snow-summited cliffs.

We had passed Mirkhani Post. Ahead, bulking ever larger, majestic, dominating all, without a cloud upon the blinding 25,000 ft. of him, was Tirich Mir. Now on the valley-floor the airstrip disclosed itself. We approached in some alarming sharp curves, seeming—though actually the pilot's skill gave ample safety-margin—about to scrape the mountain-flank with down-bent wing.

On the ground, disentangled from our parachutes, pilot and I found rapid opportunity of getting well acquainted. For we shared, throughout that Chitral day, a succession of wholly unexpected, on the whole pleasurable, yet at times highly embarrassing experiences.

"But that," in Kipling's tantalizing phrase—and in this instance the tantalization perhaps has justice—"is another story."

In atmosphere, the Pakistani Air Force station at Peshawar seemed identical with the many R.A.F. stations I used to stay in. So, while waiting for my second, bigger thrill, the flight in the Fury, a linking of memories made me indulge in a private game sometimes played in Messes or around runways when a war correspondent.

Which of these young men would I wish to be up with, which not, should something go wrong (not that it was here really likely) in the air?

The answer in one case only, that of the Harvard pilot (who also flew Furies), I already knew: a wholehearted affirmative. But that lad there, now; could I trust my militarily untrained body to him utterly, sure of his leadership and skill? Or did I suspect some flaw, which might show in a crisis?

Now there is an odd thing about this game, anyway when played in the rather taut, impressionable mood natural before an adventure. Some of the answers come in a flash, instantaneously, as certainties; and in that event, anyway in my experience, they are unlikely to be modified by later, closer knowledge.

The process seems too immediate to be based on observation by eye or ear of mannerisms, gestures, voice-tones. Nor does it concern such irrelevancies as good looks; the ugliest pilot I have ever seen, an American youth at Chabua in Assam, leapt instantaneously into my "Yes" class under question 1.

It is, I think, a kind of telepathy; and I was interested to discover, on confessing my game while waiting in Southern England during 1944 for operations which had some risk, that bomber aircrew tend to agree. Navigators, gunners, engineers ask themselves rather similar questions about the pilots who are to fly them, and at times get the same instantaneous replies.

Next morning, as instructed, I was at the Peshawar airfield. "We'll be flying together in about an hour", said a Fury pilot.

It happened that he himself, unknowing, earlier in the Mess, had leapt or flown, faster than any Fury, to unquestionable position in my private "Yes" class.

2

GETTING seated in small combat-type aircraft involves various sorts of gymnastics.

Weighed down with unaccustomed impedimenta, begoggled and parachuted, I had with almost a rock-climber's precision to seek prepared left and right footholes on the Fury's wing and fuselage before entry.

But at least, I reflected, scrambling aloft, this Pakistani fighter promises much better than the U.S. Lightning I got up in one April in Bengal.

My buttocks then wedged in an improvised cavity where the radio equipment should have been, knees pressed from above against the pilot's hips, head crammed down beneath the perspex, I could not see forward at all, only contortedly sideways.

Here, in a dual-control Fury, was relative luxury: a seat and a wide view. Nor, in cooler Peshawar, had my hands got blistered during clumsy clamberings over sun-scorched metal.

When strapped in, came the business of being drilled in the many successive deeds needing swift skilled doing should something unfortunately suggest one's jumping out. Practically no item ever seems in the same place as in one's last aircraft; certainly a Fury's internal arrangements were very different from the Harvard's five days previously.

Moreover, as always, for one unmechanically-minded, arose a fundamental doubt. Is all this really necessary; does possibility exist of my remembering these instructions in emergency?

The answer was probably No—and now mattered not at all.

For we were away, taxi-ing along the runway for take-off. My objective achieved after days of cautious pleading and uncertainty, I was really at last about to take the air in this gloriously swift fighter, piloted by a Pakistani young enough I suppose to be my son, yet of impressively high rank, in whom, from the outset, I had felt immediate total confidence.

The Fury left the ground interestingly fast. After that, for a while, I was I admit disappointed.

The same craggy, then snow-topped hills poked themselves above the horizon's rim as five days before, in the Harvard. But we were not going to them. Cruising above the plain in straight level flight at about 5,000 ft. there was no sense of the aircraft's power. Like a Cook's

guide's, quite without its warm human quality on the ground, the pilot's voice trickled mechanically through the headphones, identifying places below already obvious. The Kabul river winding towards Nowshera and Risalpur . . . then Mardan, Takhtibai, Dargai where I had stayed with friends only two nights ago, rocky Malakand.

Perhaps, from much previous Frontier travel, I knew them as well as he.

A banking turn near the Northern flank of the Swat valley brought sudden realization of the formidable type of plane I was in. A little more level flight . . . Mohmand hills, the Warsak gorge towards Afghanistan, peaks above the Malagori country where I had gushted with the Khyber Rifles in 1948 . . . and then things certainly began to happen. "Some aerobatics now", had announced the voice.

First came a dive preparatory to a loop; and almost at once, much sooner than when last doing this sort of thing—perhaps merely because six years older—I became plunged in a medley of sensations, bewilderment, exaltation, panic, bouts of real physical discomfort, the sensations I had indeed wanted, wheedled and negotiated for, yet, experiencing, could hardly bear.

All idea of direction rapidly faded. Presumably we did an Immelmann or "roll off the top." Seldom were sky or earth where I had expected. "G", the force of gravity, though actually perhaps not more than 3½, held me helplessly, like a fly gripped by the surface-tension on a cupful of water. My face seemed pulled sideways; legs were leaden. Wanting to take notes of this, I could scarcely raise my dangling arms.

Because the voice told me so, rather than because the motion was consciously recognized, I remember that at one stage we successively rolled over to the left, then to the right. The upper sides of my thighs were trembling; and I was quite sweaty.

"This is Hell; why ever did I ask for it?" demanded one half of my brain. And forthwith the voice through the headphones politely suggested: "Perhaps that's enough? Or would you care for a little of that vertical flight I showed you in the photos, and then upside down for a bit . . . It'll be rather uncomfortable?"

Before I could stop it the other half blurted back an enthusiastic imbecile assent. Immediately further things happened; and only on dazedly emerging from them did I appreciate that those moments of heavy pressure from my shoulder-straps meant that I had been traversing the Peshawar heavens head downwards.

We finished with a magnificent earthwards dive, flicking above the

treetops of the plain at about 420 m.p.h. Though we had descended so fast, I felt, though I often feel it in lumbering civilian airliners, no ear-discomfort at all.

One concluding touch. Was it mere accident, or due to the R.P.A.F.'s solicitude for a 48-year-old visitor in unknown physical trim?

After the flight, two Fury pilots and I sat drinking tea. Seemingly on some wholly other matter, to discuss a current point of office routine, the Squadron doctor dropped in. Not a question was asked. But that glance he threw me—could it have been professional?

Were that so, the Squadron earns praise not only for some beautiful aerobatics, but for a deft and tactful little finale. That I had been whirled about during the war in several kinds of fast aircraft my hosts had been assured; but further such doings in 1951, for all that these Pakistani fighter-pilots knew, might perhaps not improve middle-aged blood-vessels.

If they devised this pleasant stratagem to make certain that their guest, before leaving their charge, was unimpaired, that would have been characteristic of a hospitable and obviously very efficient group of young men.

APPENDIX III

Dangerous Moves *

BOTH the new Dominions have been behaving rashly about certain of the States to the probable detriment of the common people's peace and happiness. Pakistan began it. Her acceptance of Junagadh's accession, though justified legally, and perhaps by a long stretch of the term geographically—communication between them being practicable by sea—was ludicrous ethnologically, little Junagadh's population being (like Hyderabad's) predominantly Hindu. Such conduct seemed explicable only as a short-sighted, spiteful gesture to annoy India, or as a planned subtlety of much wider bearing. On either count it was unstatesmanlike, unworthy. India's reaction however, in our view, lacked balance, a shortcoming manifestly attributable to the acute mutual suspicions between the two Dominions. Though the bigger, stronger of them, who should therefore be scrupulous to eschew any temptation to bully, she responded by unseemly military display—backed, it is said, by economic blockade—and by publicly magnifying into a major crisis an affair relatively small and silly, which could, we believe, have been suitably handled with gentler and unhurried fingers.

But the Kashmir affair is by no means small. That State ranks among this country's biggest, and fills a region of exceptional strategic importance on the map. If—as much evidence suggests—last week's alarming incursion of armed Pathans into its Western part had the Pakistan authorities' tacit support, that is disgraceful, and will constitute a lasting slur on the new Dominion's fair name. But it also, if true, displays a strange unintelligence, for it has forthwith had the effect, which might have been foreseen, and which surely the Pakistan Government cannot have wanted, of catapulting the Kashmir Durbar into the arms of the Indian Union.

We view the prospects now created with profound misgiving, as must all of detached outlook who yearn for abatement of suffering and strife on this populous subcontinent. Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union, despite the undertaking about later voluntary withdrawal of the Union's troops and influence, makes no better sense than did Junagadh's to Pakistan. Both arrangements run flagrantly counter to realities. Whether India, without hazard to her own precariously

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re-established internal peace, and to movements of pitiable Punjab refugees, can effectively help her new protégé to restore order if the incursion has been truly formidable remains to be seen. Air transport can do much nowadays to win access to mountain-girt country. Nevertheless, her Armed Forces, though larger and stronger than Pakistan's, are over-stretched, and (like Pakistan's) much disorganized by partition.

The talk about plebiscites—for Kashmir and, by unmistakable implication, for Junagadh—though theoretically attractive, may not mean much in practice. Such things need much organizing, and are difficult to complete fairly and peacefully. Last summer's, in the N.W.F.P. and Sylhet, stirred strong feelings; and those were held in what was British India, under impartial plans devised before the country was split. Such conditions no longer exist; and it is not easy to see how plebiscites in faction-ridden States such as Kashmir and Junagadh, even if honestly conducted, could be otherwise than widely suspect.

The logical outcome from an unnatural tangle obviously would be that the rulers of Junagadh, and in due course of Hyderabad, should make up their minds to join the Indian Union, and of Kashmir to join Pakistan. The present topsy-turvydom whereby each new Dominion has gained accession from a State inhabited by a majority of contrary communal composition is too brittle and absurd to endure. Meanwhile a public, tragically aware of how strongly passions are running, and of recent unprecedented carnage, can but hope for statesmanship from both Governments. Pakistan's reaction to India's forward move will be awaited with anxiety. The dismal, deep, damnable fact must be faced that the two Dominions now stand perilously poised before what, whether so declared or not, would be war—a war which neither would be able to sustain militarily or economically without ruin.

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